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Greek Anthology.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

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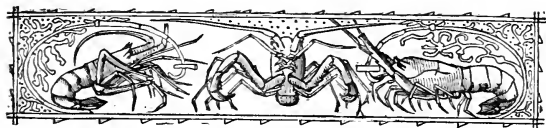
BOOK III.—*continued*

VOL. II.

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CHAPTER II.

‘**A**ND now, Mr. Laurence,’ said Lady Ambrose, ‘begin at the beginning, please, and don’t do as Lord Kennington did at the Eton and Harrow match the other day—go talking to me about “overs,” and “long-stops,” and things like that before I was even quite sure of the difference between “out” and “in.”’

‘Of course,’ Laurence began, smiling with a little prefatory shyness, ‘we can all understand the difference between a coarse common rustic palate, like that of the burly farmer, for instance, who just enjoys food in a brute way when he is hungry, and drink so

long as it is spirituous at all times ; and the palate of the true epicure, that is sensitive to taste as the nicest ear is to music, and can discriminate perfectly all the subtle semitones and chords of flavour. Well, transfer this image from the mouth to the mind, and there's the whole thing in a nutshell. There is culture and no culture. A person is really cultivated when he can taste not only the broad flavours of life—gulping its joys and sorrows down, either with a vulgar grimace of disgust, or an equally vulgar hearty voracity ; but when with a delicate self-possession he appreciates all the subtler taste of things, when he discriminates between joy and joy, between sorrow and sorrow, between love and love, between career and career ; discerning in all incidents and emotions their beauty, their pathos, their absurdity, or their tragedy, as the case may be.'

'You mean, then,' said Miss Merton,

‘that a man of the highest culture is a sort of emotional *bon vivant*.’

‘That surely is hardly a fair way—’ began Laurence.

‘Excuse me, my dear Laurence,’ broke in Mr. Luke, in his most magnificent of manners, ‘it is perfectly fair—it is admirably fair. Emotional *bon vivant*!’ he exclaimed. ‘I thank Miss Merton for teaching me that word! for it may remind us all,’ Mr. Luke continued, drawing out his words slowly, as if he liked the taste of them, ‘how near our view of the matter is to that of a certain Galilean peasant—of whom Miss Merton has perhaps heard—who described the highest culture by just the same metaphor, as a hunger and a thirst after righteousness. Our notion of it differs only from his, from the *Zeitgeist* having made it somewhat wider.’

Miss Merton, in her inmost soul, did anything but return Mr. Luke’s compliment, and consider his comment on her words as either

admirably or perfectly fair. However, she held her peace. The thoughts of Lady Ambrose had been flowing in a slightly different direction.

‘But what I want to ask,’ she said, ‘is this. I want to know why it is that whenever one hears it said, “Oh, So-and-so is a very *cultivated* person,” one always expects to find him—well, almost half professional as it were, or at least able to talk of nothing but music, or painting, or books? I mean a man who’s *merely* a cultivated person, doesn’t seem ever to be quite a man of the world, or to be much good in society, except when one wants him to talk on his own subjects—I hate people myself who *have* subjects—and then, ten to one, he doesn’t know when to leave off. Now, Mr. Laurence, I see you want to interrupt me; but do let me say my say. A right amount of culture is of course delightful, and personally, I don’t much care for people who haven’t got it. But too much of it—I’m sure

Mr. Laurence, you must agree with me at heart—is a mistake. And that, you know, is all I mean about it ; nothing more than that.'

' Ah,' said Laurence, smiling, ' I think I see what it is. You *will* look on culture as some special kind of accomplishment or taste, like music ; and you think that in some special way it is bound up with books ; and books you look upon as something special also, beginning and ending with themselves ; and unless I am much mistaken, you think that the more books a man has read, the more cultivated you may safely call him.'

' Not all books,' said Lady Ambrose in an injured tone. ' Of course I don't mean trashy novels, and of course I don't mean blue-books, or books of history.'

' But what I want first of all to impress on you,' said Laurence, ' is that whatever its relation to books may be, culture is by no means a bookish thing, or a thing that ought

to be less in place at Hurlingham than at the South Kensington Museum. Nor is it in any sense a hobby, or a special taste, to be gratified at the expense of anything else. Instead of that, it is the education of all our tastes, of all our powers of enjoying life ; and, so far from its being a thing for recluses, and a substitute for society, it is only when naturalised in the best society that it can at all do itself justice in expressing itself outwardly, or even exist in any completeness inwardly.'

Lady Ambrose smiled, and looked more interested, and began to give Laurence her most intelligent attention.

'Still,' Laurence went on, 'culture and books have a good deal to do with one another ; and since they are so bound up together in your mind, let us try to see at once what the relation really is. Let us begin, then, with that part of culture which in this sense is most bound up with books—most bound up because it cannot be got without

them ; the part of culture, I mean, that comes from the knowledge of the past—from a knowledge of history, in short, or parts of history.'

Lady Ambrose here took Laurence fairly aback by the way in which she repeated the word ' History ! '

' Well, judging from the results I have seen,' she said, with an amount of decision in her voice that was positively startling, ' I can not say, Mr. Laurence, that I agree with you. And I think that on this subject I have a right to speak.'

' What on earth *can* the woman be meaning ? ' said Mr. Luke to himself.

' It is not a fortnight ago,' Lady Ambrose went on, ' that I sat at dinner by somebody—I won't tell you his name—who had not only read heaven knows how much history, but had written, I believe, even more than he had read. And what do you think this good man did during all the early part of dinner ? Why, he did nothing but fume, and fret, and

bluster, so that everyone was made uncomfortable, simply because somebody said that King Harold was not quite so excellent a character as the late Prince Consort ; and I heard him muttering, "What monstrous injustice ! What monstrous ignorance !" to himself for nearly half an hour. I don't think I ever saw such a—I was going to say,' said Lady Ambrose, laughing softly, 'such a beast—but I won't ; I'll say a bear instead. At last, however—I don't know how it came about—he said to me, in a very solemn voice, "What a terrible defeat that was which we had at Bouvines !" I answered timidly—not thinking we were at war with anyone—that I had seen nothing about it in the papers. "H'm !" he said, giving a sort of a grunt that made me feel dreadfully ignorant, "why, I had an Excursus on it myself in the 'Archæological Gazette,' only last week." And, do you know, it turned out that the Battle of Bouvines was fought in the

thirteenth century, and had, as far as I could, make out, something to do with Magna Charta. Now, Mr. Laurence, if that's the sort of culture one gets from studying history, I'm glad I've forgotten even the names of the twelve Cæsars, and the dates of the kings of England. Besides,' Lady Ambrose added, 'it makes one think what a serious thing it is to lose a battle, if people are to be made so cross about it six hundred years afterwards.'

'I quite agree with you,' said Laurence, 'that if that's the sort of culture one gets from history, we had better never open a history book again. But history, Lady Ambrose, has very little to do with the Battle of Bouvines, and nothing with the character of Harold.'

'Then what has it got to do with?' asked Lady Ambrose, incredulously. 'It certainly has to do with kings, and wars, and facts, and dates, hasn't it?'

‘What people call facts,’ said Laurence, ‘are only the dry bones of history. It is quite true that most professed historians have hitherto, instead of painting the face of the past, simply made discrepant notes about the shape of its skull : everything that could give the shape of the skull the least significance they left unthought of, or dismissed it in an occasional chapter. But really the least important of all the world’s events are those that you can localise exactly, and put an exact date to ; those which alone most historians see.’

‘But,’ interposed Miss Merton, ‘don’t you call such things as the events in Cæsar’s life, for instance, or Hildebrand’s, history?’

‘Looked on simply as events,’ said Laurence, ‘I call them biography, or I call them *illustrations* of history ; but I do not call them history. History, in its true sense, is a travelling in the past ; the best of histories would be but the carriage or the

steamboat you travelled by ; your histories of dates and battles are at best but the Bradshaws and the railway-maps. Our past must be an extension of the present, or it is no real past. Now I expect, Lady Ambrose, that, in its true sense, you know a good deal more history than you are aware of. I saw you reading Saint Simon yesterday evening, and you alluded to Grammont's Memoirs at dinner.'

'Oh, of course,' said Lady Ambrose, 'books like that ! But, then, they really give you such a notion of the times, and quite take you back to them.'

'Nothing is history that does not,' said Laurence.

'Really,' exclaimed Lady Ambrose, brightening. "' Il y a plus de vingt ans que je dis de la prose, sans que j'en susse rien." And so it seems that I have known history without suspecting it, just as M. Jourdain talked prose.'

‘Pardon me,’ cried Mr. Saunders, ‘if I interrupt you for a moment; but, Mr. Laurence, though I admit that there is a great deal of truth in what you say, you have not even alluded to the great function of history, nor have you even hinted at the great use of facts. However, perhaps I had better reserve what I have to say on this, as well as on certain other matters, till by-and-bye.’

‘Very well,’ said Laurence, ‘if history, then, is a travelling in the past—what else it is, as Mr. Saunders says, we can talk of afterwards—don’t you see what it does for us, Lady Ambrose, in the way of culture—does for us, not as students, but as men and women of the world? Just think for a moment what our own age would seem to us if all the past, beyond the memories of our grandfathers, was a blank to us; and then think how infinitely our minds are enlarged, how a freer air, as it were, seems to blow through

them, even from that vague knowledge of the past afloat in the world, which we pick up here and there as we go along. Even that has an effect upon us. It prevents us being as we else should be, merely *temporal* people, who are just as narrow-minded and dull as those merely *local* people—the natives of a neighbourhood—who wear gorgeous ribands at flower-shows in the country. Don't you remember last year, when I was staying with you, how you pointed some of them out to me, and how amused you were at their ways and their finery ?'

Lady Ambrose smiled and nodded.

'Go on, Mr. Laurence—I can understand all this,' she said. 'But I want to hear a little more.'

'Well,' said Laurence, 'your own knowledge of the history of France and England during the last two hundred years—you know well enough how that has made you, in a certain sense, more a woman of the

world. What would you be, for instance, if you never knew that there had been a French Revolution, or an English Revolution—a Cromwell, or a Louis Quatorze, or a Mirabeau? But your knowledge of history does not end here. You know something, at any rate, of the feudal times. You know what a castle was like, what a knight was like, what a monk was like. You know something, too, of Roman and Greek history; and come—to go no farther—you know the Bible.’

‘I hope,’ said Lady Ambrose, in a voice of reproving solemnity, ‘that one would not call that history.’

‘Certainly not,’ said Mr. Saunders, with a small suppressed chuckle.

‘At all events,’ proceeded Laurence, ignoring these interruptions, ‘you know something of Rome, and Greece, and Palestine, and Egypt; and each of these names is really a little aërial chariot which carries your imagination back as you pro-

nounce it into some remote age, when life was different from what it is now. So is the mind widened by even a little vague history. Or, just repeat to yourself such words as *France* and *Italy*, and think for a moment of the effect of them. They are not mere names—mere geographical expressions; but they are spells which evoke, whether you will or no, hosts of subtle associations, rising up like spirits out of the past centuries, and hovering in the air round you with their unbidden influence, and mixing with all your notions of Europe as it is now. Or, would you feel the matter more strongly yet, think, when you are travelling, what but for history would Venice be, or Athens, or Jerusalem? If it were not for history, be it never so vaguely understood, would you find the same indescribable fascination in Rome?’

‘I never was at Rome,’ said Lady Ambrose. ‘We’re going there next winter with the Kenningtons.’

This piece of intelligence brought Laurence to a stop. Mr. Rose, however, whose imagination had been fired by all this talk about history, suddenly broke forth.

‘And also,’ he exclaimed, ‘is it not by history alone that we can in our day learn anything of the more subtle and gorgeous dyes that life is capable of taking—how fair a thing it may be, how rich in harmonious freedom, and beauty of form, and love, and passionate friendship ? Why, but for history what should we be now but a flock of listless barbarians, *ὄνειράτων ἀλίγκιοι μορφαῖσι φύρόντες εἰκῇ πάντα* ? Would not all life’s choicer and subtler pleasures be lost to us, if Athens did not still live to redeem us from the bondage of the middle age, and if the Italian Renaissance—that strange child of Aphrodite and Tannhäuser, did not still live to stimulate us out of the torpor of the

present age? What but for history should we know,' cried Mr. Rose, 'of the χάρις of Greece, of the lust of Rome, of the strange secrets of the Borgias? Consider, too, the bowers of quiet, full of sweet dreams, that history will always keep for us—how it surrounds the house of the present with the boundless gardens of the past—gardens rich in woods, and waters, and flowers, and outlooks on illimitable seas. Think of the immortal dramas which history sets before us; of the keener and profounder passions which it shows in action, of the exquisite groups and figures it reveals to us, of nobler mould than ours—Harmodius and Aristogeiton, Achilles and Patroclus, David and Jonathan, our English Edward and the fair Piers Gaveston, ἅμα τ' ὠκύμορος καὶ ὀϊζυρὸς περὶ πάντων, or, above all, those two by the agnus castus and the plane-tree where Ilyssus flowed,'—Mr. Rose's voice gradually subsided,—'and where

the Attic grasshoppers chirped in shrill summer choir.'

'At any rate, Lady Ambrose,' Laurence resumed briskly, 'you now see something of the way in which history gives us culture; and you see, too,—this is the chief point I want to impress upon you—that in history, and many other things as well, books are only the telescopes through which we see distant facts; and we no more become *bookish* by such a use of books than you became *optical* when you looked through your telescope in Gloucestershire, and saw Captain Audley, at the bottom of the park, proposing to your under-keeper's daughter.'

'I really do believe,' said Lady Ambrose, 'that that man is a little off his head. However,' she went on laughing, 'I give up about the bookishness, Mr. Laurence, and I dare say one really is the better for knowing something about history; but still, I can't help thinking that the chief thing to know

about is, after all, the life about one, and that knowledge, just like charity, should begin at home.'

'There,' said Laurence, 'we quite agree ; and that, if I managed to express myself clearly, was the very thing that I set out with saying. It is with the life about us that all our concern lies ; and culture's double end is simply this—to make us appreciate that life, and to make that life worth appreciating. We only study the past to adorn our present, and make our view of it clearer. And now, since we have at any rate suggested how this is done, let us put the past, and the distant too—everything, in fact, to which books are only the telescopes—out of our minds altogether, and merely consider the real heart of the matter—culture and the present. I tried to explain just now that we meant by a man of culture one on whom none of the finer flavours of life are lost—who can appreciate, sympathise with, criticise, all the scenes, situations, sayings, or

actions around him—a sad or happy love-affair, a charm of manner and conversation, a beautiful sunset, or a social absurdity. I declare,’ said Laurence, ‘I could tell better whether a man was really cultivated, from the way in which he talked gossip, or told a story, than from the way in which he discussed a poem or a picture.’

‘Certainly,’ said Leslie. ‘I don’t call a woman cultivated who bothers me at dinner first with discussing this book and then that—whose one perpetual question is, “Have you read So-and-so?” But I call a woman cultivated who responds and who knows what I mean as we pass naturally from subject to subject—who by a flash or a softness in her eyes, by a slight gesture of the hand, by a sigh, by a flush in the cheek, makes me feel as I talk of some lovely scene that she too could love it—as I speak of love or sorrow, makes me feel that she herself has known them ; as I speak of ambition, or *ennui*,

or hope, or remorse, or loss of character, makes me feel that all these are not mere names to her, but things.'

'Do you call *me* cultivated, Mr. Leslie?' whispered Mrs. Sinclair, in a soft parenthesis.

'I mean,' said Leslie, finishing, 'I like to hear each key I touch make, not a dead thud, as on a piece of wood, but strike a musical string.'

'Good,' murmured Mr. Rose; 'that is good! Yes,' he continued, 'the aim of culture, if Mr. Leslie will lend me his nice metaphor, is indeed to make the soul a musical instrument, which may yield music either to itself or to others, at any appulse from without; and the more elaborate a man's culture is, the richer and more composite can this music be. The minds of some men are like a simple pastoral reed. Only single melodies, and these unaccompanied, can be played upon them—glad or sad; whilst the minds of

others, who look at things from countless points of view, and realise, as Shakespeare did, their composite nature—their minds become, as Shakespeare's was, like a great orchestra. Or sometimes,' said Mr. Rose dreamily, as if his talk was lapsing into a soliloquy, 'when he is a mere passive observer of things, letting impressions from without move him as they will, I would compare the man of culture to an *Æolian* harp, which the winds at will play through—a beautiful face, a rainbow, a ruined temple, a death-bed, or a line of poetry, wandering in like a breath of air amongst the chords of his soul, touching note after note into soft music, and at last gently dying away into silence.'

'Well now,' said Laurence, in a very matter-of-fact tone, for he saw that Mr. Rose's dreamy manner always tended to confuse Lady Ambrose, 'since we are now clear that the aim of culture is to make us better com-

pany as men and women of the world, let us consider a little farther how culture is attained. We have just spoken of histories and other books, which merely bring us face to face with facts that would else be out of our reach. We now come to two other things—the facts of the life about us, the facts which experience teaches us, and to which all other facts are secondary ; and, farther, to the way in which all this knowledge—the knowledge of the living present especially, is (for we have really not talked of this at all yet), turned into culture. Mere acquaintance with facts will not do it ; mere experience of facts will not do it. A woman, for instance, may have had all kinds of experience—society, sorrow, love, travel, remorse, distraction—and yet she may not be cultivated. She may have gone through everything only half consciously. She may never have recognised what her life has been. What is needed to teach her—to turn this raw material into

culture? Here, Lady Ambrose, we come to our friends the books again—not, however, to such books as histories, but to books of art, to poetry, and books akin to poetry. The former do but enlarge our own common experience. The latter are an experience in themselves, and an experience that interprets all former experiences. The mind, if I may borrow an illustration from photography, is a sensitised plate, always ready to receive the images made by experience on it. Poetry is the developing solution, which first makes these images visible. Or, to put it in another way, if some books are the telescopes with which we look at distant facts, poetry—I use the word in its widest sense—is a magic mirror which shows us the facts about us reflected in it as no telescope or microscope could show them to us. Let a person of experience look into this, and experience then becomes culture. For in that magic mirror we see our life surrounded with issues view-

less to the common eye. We see it compassed about with chariots of fire and with horses of fire. Then we know the real aspect of our joys and sorrows. We see the lineaments, we look into the eyes of thoughts, and desires, and associations, which had been before unseen and scarcely suspected presences—dim swarms clustering around our every action. Then how all kinds of objects and of feelings begin to cling together in our minds! A single sense or a single memory is touched, and a thrill runs through countless others. The smell of autumn woods, the colour of dying fern, may turn by a subtle transubstantiation into pleasures and faces that will never come again—a red sunset and a windy sea-shore into a last farewell, and the regret of a lifetime.'

Laurence had chosen these illustrations of his quite at random ; but he was fortunate in the last in a way which he never dreamt of. Lady Ambrose, in her early and unwise days,

had actually had a love-affair. She had been engaged to a handsome young Guardsman, with only eleven hundred a year, and no prospects but debts; and though she had successfully exchanged him for Sir George and his million of money, she still sometimes recalled him, and the wild September evening when she had seen her last of him upon Worthing pier.

‘Ah,’ she exclaimed, with some emotion in her voice, ‘I know exactly what you mean now. Why, there have been poems at one time or another of one’s life, that one could really hardly bear to hear repeated. Now there’s that of Byron’s, “When we two parted.” I don’t even know if it is right to think it a good poem—but still, do you know, there was a time when, just because it was connected with something—it almost made me cry if anyone repeated or sang it—one of my brothers, I know, who had a beautiful voice, was always ——’ Lady Ambrose here grew

conscious that she was showing more feeling than she thought at all becoming. She blushed, she stammered a little, and then making a rush at another topic, 'But what is Mr. Rose,' she exclaimed, 'saying about the Clock-tower and the Thames Embankment?'

'I was merely thinking,' said Mr. Rose, who had been murmuring to himself at intervals for some time, 'of a delicious walk I took last week, by the river side, between Charing Cross and Westminster. The great clock struck the chimes of midnight; a cool wind blew; and there went streaming on the wide wild waters with long vistas of reflected lights wavering and quivering in them; and I roamed about for hours, hoping I might see some unfortunate cast herself from the Bridge of Sighs. It was a night I thought well in harmony with despair. Fancy,' exclaimed Mr. Rose, 'the infinity of emotions which the sad sudden splash in the dark river

would awaken in one's mind—and all due to that one poem of Hood's!

‘Yes,’ said Laurence, not having listened to Mr. Rose, who spoke, indeed, somewhat low, ‘Yes,’ he said, continuing the same train of thought he had left off with, and looking first at Lady Ambrose and then at Miss Merton, ‘is it not poetry that does all this for the world? I use poetry in its widest sense, and include in it all imaginative literature, and other art as well. Is it not the poet that gives our existence all its deepest colours, or enables us to give them to it ourselves? Is it not—if I may quote a translation of Goethe that I made myself—

*Is't not the harmony that from his bosom springs,
And back into itself the whole world brings?
When Nature round her spindle, cold and strong,
Winds on and on the endless threads of things;
When all existences, a tuneless throng,
Make discord as with jangling strings,
Whose life-breath bids the flux of blind creation
Move to a rhythmic music of his own?
Who calls each single thing to the common consecration,
When rapturously it trembles into tone?*

*Who sets our wild moods and the storms in tune ?
Our sad moods, and the still eve's crimson glow ?
Who showers down all the loveliest flowers of June,
Where she, the heart's beloved, will go ?
Who, of a few green leaves in silly twine,
Makes toil's immortal guerdon, art's reward,
Raises the mortal, draws down the divine ?
The power of man incarnate in the bard.¹*

And so,' Laurence went on, 'if it is to the bard that we owe all these fine things, we need surely not fear that we shall be thought bookish if we say that a society cannot be really good that does not as a body draw a large amount of its nourishment from the bard's work. Of course in one sense poetry exists unwritten ; but in the general run of people this will never properly awake itself, make itself available, but at the spell of written poetry. Nay, this is true even of the poet himself. Why else does he externalise his feelings—give them a body ? As I say, however, the general catholic use of poetry

¹ Vid. *Faust*, Prologue for the Theatre.

is not to make us admire the poetry of poems but discern the poetry of life. I myself,' Laurence went on, 'am devoted to literature as literature, to poetry as poetry. I value it not only because it makes me appreciate the originals of the things it deals with, but for itself. I often like the description of a sunset better than I like a sunset; I don't care two straws about Liberty, but my mind is often set all aglow by a good ode to her. I delight in, I can talk over, I can brood over, the form of a stanza, the music of a line, the turn of a phrase, the flavour of an epithet. Few things give me such pleasure for the moment as an apt quotation from Horace or Shakespeare. But this, I admit, is a hobby—a private hobby—this distinct literary taste, just as a taste for blue china is, and must certainly not be confused with culture in its deeper and wider sense.'

'Ah,' said Mr. Rose earnestly, 'don't despise this merely literary culture, as you call

it, or the pleasure it is to have at command a beautiful quotation. As I have been lying on the bank here, this afternoon, and looking up into the trees, and watching the blue sky glancing between the leaves of them—as I have been listening to the hum of the insects or looking out with half-shut eyes towards the sea across the green rustling shrubs, and the red rose-blossoms, fragments of poetry have been murmuring in my memory like a swarm of bees, and have been carrying my fancy hither and thither in all manner of swift luxurious ways. The “spreading favour,” for instance, of these trees that we sit under, brought just now into my mind those magical words of Virgil’s—

O qui me gelidis in vallibus Haemi
Sistat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbrâ !

What a picture there ! What a thrill it sent all through me, like a rush of enchanted wind ! In another moment the verse that goes just before, also came to me—

Virginibus bacchata Lacaenis
Taygeta——

and into the delicious scene now around me—this beautiful modern garden—mixed instantly visions of Greek mountains, and ragged summits, and choirs of Laconian maidens maddened with a divine enthusiasm, and with fair white vesture wildly floating. Again, another line from the same poem, from the same passage, touched my memory, and changed, in a moment, the whole complexion of my feelings—

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas.

Think of that! The spirit is whirled away in a moment of time, and set amongst quite new images, quite other sources of excitement. But again, in an instant, the splash of the fountain caught my ear, and awoke, I scarcely know how, the memory of some lines in one of Petrarch's Epistles—

Soporifero clausam qui murmure vallem
Implet inexhausto descendens alveus amne—

and my imagination, on the wings of the verses, was borne away floating towards Vacluse. Think, then, within the space of five minutes how many thoughts and sensations, composite and crowded, can, by the agency of mere literature, enrich the mind, and make life intenser.'

'And I—' said Laurence, smiling, 'do you see that far-away sail out on the horizon line?—well, I caught myself murmuring over a scrap of Milton, only two minutes ago—

As when afar at sea a fleet descried
Hangs in the clouds, by equinoctial gales
Close sailing from Bengala.

Why I could go on capping verses with you the whole afternoon, if we had nothing else to do. But besides this, a knowledge of books as books has got another use. How it enriches conversation, by enabling us to

talk by hints and allusions, and to convey so many more meanings than our actual words express. I came across an exquisite instance of this the other day, in a book of anecdotes about the poet Rogers, which shows how a familiarity with the scenes even of Greek poetry may give a brilliance to fashionable talk in the nineteenth century. One evening at Miss Lydia White's—she was a Tory, and well known then in society—a guest who was a Whig, said *à propos* of the depressed state of his own party at the time, "There is nothing left for us but to sacrifice a Tory virgin." "Yes," said Miss Lydia White, "I believe there's nothing the Whigs wouldn't do *to raise the wind*." But yet, after all, this is not *the* important thing, and I hope Lady Ambrose will forgive us for having talked so long about it.'

'And so one *must* read a great deal, after all, to be really cultivated,' said Lady Ambrose, in a disappointed tone. 'You've made culture

seem so nice, that I feel positively quite ashamed to think how seldom now I look at a line of poetry, except, of course, when anything new comes out, that everybody *must* read.'

'I don't think you need be afraid, on that score,' said Leslie. 'If society is to be cultivated, it must no doubt read a good deal, as a body. But all its members need not. With women especially, nothing startles me more than when I find sometimes how very far, if they have had any serious experience of the world and life, a very little poetry will go.'

'I expect,' said Miss Merton, 'that we are naturally more introspective than men, and so, in what concerns ourselves, a very little will make us cultivated; although we don't certainly get so easily as men that indifferent way of looking on life as a whole, which I suppose is what you call the dramatic spirit, and which people praise so

in Shakespeare. But as to what Mr. Leslie says, I have so often myself noticed the same thing in girls—especially at times when they are passing into womanhood, without having made much of a success of youth. I remember one poor friend of mine, whose whole life seemed to become clear to her through just one line of Tennyson's—

My life has crept so long on a broken wing.

I suppose it was a sort of magic mirror to her, as Mr. Laurence was saying just now.'

'I,' said Leslie, 'once knew some one at Baden, who spent half her time at the tables, as much the observed of all observers as Worth and her own strange beauty could make her—she liked being stared at—and who was certainly not a woman who gave much of her time to reading. She was very wretched with her husband, and her name was far from being above the reach of gossip. Talking one day to her in a hardish flippant sort of way—a tone of talk which she

affected to like—I alluded by some chance to Francesca di Rimini in Dante ; and I shall never forget the tone in which she exclaimed, “Poor Francesca!”—its passion and its pathos. I was surprised that she had even looked into Dante : but she had ; and that one passage had lit up her whole life for her—that one picture of the two lovers “going for ever on the accursed air.”’

‘How nice of you, Mr. Leslie,’ said Mrs. Sinclair, ‘to remember my poor verses!’

‘Let us consider, too,’ said Laurence, ‘that poetry does not only enable us to appreciate what we have already experienced, but it puts us in the way of getting new experiences. This was Wordsworth’s special claim for poetry, that it widened our sympathies—widened them in some new direction—that it was ever giving us, in fact, not new quotations, but new culture.’

‘Ah, here,’ said Leslie, ‘is a thing that continually occurs to me. Just consider for

a moment the wonderful social effect of even so partial a thing as the culture that Wordsworth himself gave us. Consider the effect of it on a common worldly woman—let her be girl or matron—who without it would be nothing but a half mechanical creature, living as far as her interests went, a wretched hand-to-mouth existence of thin distraction, or eager anxious scheming for herself or her daughters. Cultivate her, I say, just in this one direction—give her but this one fragment of culture, a love of Nature—and all the mean landscape of her mind will be lit up with a sudden beauty, as the beam of ideal sunshine breaks across it, with its “light that never was on sea or land.” I don’t say that such a woman will become better for this, but she will become more interesting. In a girl, however pretty, what is there to interest a man if he reads nothing in her face from night to night but that she is getting daily more worn and jaded in the search for a rich

husband? Or even, to go a step higher, in the unthinking, uncultivated flirt, so common in every class of society—what is there in her that a man will not soon discover to be insipid and wearying?’

‘Surely,’ remonstrated Mrs. Sinclair plaintively, ‘that rather depends on what she is like. I must stand up for my sex.’

‘But give her,’ Leslie went on, ‘one genuine, one disinterested taste, and all is changed. If I had an audience about me of young ladies, whom it was not too late to advise—girls entering on the world, determined to run the worldly course, and to satisfy all the expectations of the most excellent and lowest-minded of chaperons, I would say this to them :—I have no doubt you are all ignorant; of course you are all vain. That to make a brilliant match is your great object, you all avow. A certain sort of flirting, of which the less said the better, is your most disinterested taste. I know all

this (I should say) and I can't help it ; nor do I ask you to alter one of these points for the better. But this I do ask you to do. Try to add something else to them. Try to win for yourselves one taste of a truer and deeper sort. Study Wordsworth, and some parts of Shelley ; open out your sympathies, by their aid, in just one direction. Learn to love the sea, and the woods, and the wild flowers, with all their infinite changes of scent, and colour, and sound—the purple moor, the brown mountain stream, the rolling mists, the wild smell of the heather. Let these things grow to “haunt you like a passion,” learn in this way the art of

desiring

More in this world than any understand.

You'll perhaps find it a little dull at first ; but go on, and don't be disheartened ; and then—by-and-by—by-and-by, go and look in the looking-glass, and study your own face. Hasn't some new look, child, come into your

eyes, and given them an expression—a something that they wanted before? Smile. Hasn't your smile some strange meaning in it that it never used to have? You are a little more melancholy, perhaps. But no matter. The melancholy is worth its cost. You are now a mystery. Men can't see through you at a glance as they did; and so, as Sterne says, "you have their curiosity on your side," and that alone—even that will have increased your value tenfold in our Babylonian marriage-market.'

'Well, Mr. Leslie,' said Lady Ambrose with severe gravity, 'if that's the way you'd talk to young ladies, I should be very careful you never spoke to any that I had anything to do with.'

'Many people, I know,' Leslie went on, passing by the rebuke, 'think that books and culture are a kind substitute for life, and that the real masters in the art of living have no need for this poor *pis-aller*. They only

drive four-in-hand, or shoot, or dance, or run away with their friends' wives. But no mistake can be greater. Culture is not a substitute for life, but the key to it. It is really to the men of culture, to the men who have read and who have thought, that all exercise, all distractions, mental or bodily, moral or immoral, yield their finer keener pleasures. They are the men that husbands dread for their wives, and that fascinating people find fascinating.'

Lady Ambrose much disapproved of the tone of this speech ; but none the less, in a certain mysterious way, did it insidiously increase her appreciation of the value of culture ; and she felt that with Laurence at any rate she most thoroughly agreed, when he said by way of summing up,

‘ And so now I think we see what culture is, and the reason why it is essential to good society. We see that much as it depends on books, life is really the great thing it has to do

with. It is the passions, the interests, the relations, the absurdities of life that it fits us to see into, to taste, to discriminate. And I think we see too, that, not only is culture essential to good society, but good society also is essential to culture, and that there was therefore very good reason for the exclusiveness we began with. For in the first place I expect it requires certain natural advantages of position to look at, and overlook life in that sympathetic and yet self-possessed way, which alone can give us a complete view of it. And in the next place, the more we discern in life, the more social polish shall we want to do justice to our discernment; and not polish only, but those far subtler things, tone and balance as well. I think it was the late Lord Lytton who remarked in one of his books, what an offensive thing gaiety was sure to be in any woman except one of the most perfect breeding. So too with humour—the greater sense of humour a well-bred

man has, the more delightful he is; the greater sense of humour a vulgar man has, the more intolerable he is.'

The measure of Lady Ambrose's assent was now almost complete. It remained, however, for Mrs. Sinclair to give the finishing touch.

'I remember,' she said softly and regretfully, 'a friend of mine—he was killed afterwards, poor man, in a duel near Dresden—who once, when he was down for some weeks in the country fishing, fell desperately in love with a certain rector's daughter, who sang, and painted, and read German, and had a beautiful figure as well. The mother at once saw what was in the wind, and asked him directly to come and lunch at the rectory. And there three things happened. First, the mother began telling him what very superior society there was in the neighbouring local town; "In fact its tone," she said, "is *almost* like that of a cathedral town." Then

the lovely daughter asked him if he was *partial* to boiled chicken ; and then, a little later on—it was this that quite finished him, for the two first shocks he said he might have got over—in answer to some little common joke or other that he made, she told him, with a sort of arch smile—what do you think ? why, that he was *saucy*.’

‘ I confess,’ said Miss Merton laughing, ‘ that it *would* take a very great deal of charm of some sort to make one get over that. At any rate it’s a comfort to think that the young ladies in our new Republic won’t call their admirers “ saucy.” ’

‘ Well,’ said Laurence, ‘ and so we have got thus far—we have made our ideal society, as highly bred, as highly educated, as polished, as sparkling, as graceful, as easy, as dignified, as we can possibly imagine it. And now, what next ? ’

There was a moment’s pause.

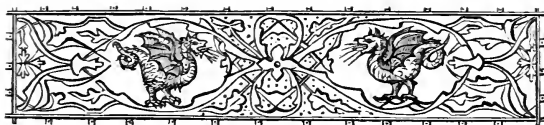
‘ What I should want in a Utopia,’ Allen

broke in abruptly, 'would be something definite for the people to do, each in his own walk of life. What I should want would be some honest, definite, straight-forward, religious belief that we might all live by, and that would connect what we did and went through here with something more important elsewhere. Without this, to start with,' he said, half sadly and half coldly, 'all life seems to me a mockery.'

'And are you quite sure,' said Laurence, with a slight sigh, 'that it is not a mockery?'

Mr. Luke here saw an opening for which he had long been waiting.





CHAPTER III.

‘**M**Y dear Laurence,’ Mr. Luke began ‘of course human life is a mockery, if you leave out the one thing in it that is of real importance. And it is because you have done this, that Lord Allen thinks that culture is so little worth caring for, though I doubt, by the way, if he expressed quite accurately what I conclude him to have meant. However,’ said Mr. Luke, clearing his throat, and looking round at the general company, ‘what was said about culture just now was perfectly right—perfectly right, and really capitally illustrated—as far as it went. The only fault

was that, as I say, the most important point in the matter was entirely left out. It is quite true that culture is, as Mr. Laurence observed so happily, the sensitising of the mental palate—the making it a good taster. But a taster of what? Not only of social absurdities, or love affairs, or beautiful scenery, but of morality, of righteousness, of Christianity. The really profound work of culture is to make us judges of these—judges able to tell in an instant real righteousness and real Christianity from pseudo-righteousness and pseudo-Christianity, so that we may swallow the true like the healing water of life, and reject the false like a sample of bad claret—that we may have, in fact, just the same horror of any doctrine or dogma that is contrary to sweet reason (such, for instance, he said confidentially to Lady Grace, ‘as that of eternal punishment) that we have for young ladies who call their friends “saucy,” or for young ladies’ mothers

who look on a bishop's palace as a focus of the most polite society. So I think, if you only all recognise this, that culture includes—in fact, essentially is, the discernment of true righteousness, of true morality, you need none of you fear that to a really cultivated society life will be in any danger of becoming a mockery.'

'I was sorry,' said Miss Merton in a low tone to Laurence, 'to hear you say that just now, because I know you don't mean it.'

Laurence, who had been sitting a little above her on the bank, moved quietly down, and placed himself at her side.

'You make me feel ashamed of myself,' he said to her, 'when you speak like this.'

There was something in his manner which a little embarrassed Miss Merton. She looked down, and said nothing for a moment; and then, not having quite command of her voice, she answered him in a tone rather louder than she intended.

‘Well,’ she said, ‘and don’t you think that some definite faith or other is needed by the world?’

‘Yes, *I* think so; *I* think so. I entirely agree with Miss Merton,’ exclaimed somebody. But it was not Laurence. To the surprise of everyone, it was Mr. Saunders. All eyes were turned on him.

‘Will you allow me,’ he said, looking round him with a nervous eagerness, as though doubtful if he should gain a hearing, ‘will you allow me to make a few observations here—it will only take a moment—to remind you of just a *few* things which I think ought not to be lost sight of? Well,’ Mr. Saunders went on, as he seemed to have secured the ear of the house, ‘in the first place as to history, just one word. The main use of history, which Mr. Laurence forgot altogether to mention, is of course, as Comte has so well established, to teach us his philosophy of it—to show us, in other words, how

entirely *non compos mentis* the world was till our time, and that it is only in the present century that it has acquired the power of passing a reasonable judgment. And next, as to facts ; mere facts, as facts, I think quite as useless as Mr. Laurence does, except for one reason. And that reason is the way in which from every side they confute, give the lie to, annihilate, the pretensions of revealed religion, and of the myths which it calls its history. This, however, by the way. It was not the chief thing that I wanted to say to you. Now you all,' Mr. Saunders went on, holding up his forefinger and addressing the company, 'propose to form a picture of what the world ought to be—what I suppose you hope it will be ; and you say, and very rightly, that the great secret is that it should appreciate properly the pleasures of human life. But, please mark this, you have quite ignored the most important thing of all—the vast change that all these pleasures are

undergoing, that the whole aspect of life is undergoing, beneath the touch of modern thought and modern philosophy; nay—and this indeed is *the* special point I want to lay stress upon—Mr. Luke just now even used those obsolete and misleading words, righteousness and morality, soiled by so many unworthy associations. By the way,’ he exclaimed, stopping suddenly and looking round him, ‘I suppose I may speak the truth freely, as I know well enough that all to whom my vaticinations would be unwelcome are sure to mistake me for a Cassandra.’

‘Mistake him for a what?’ said Lady Ambrose, in a loud undertone.

‘She was a beautiful young unfortunate,’ whispered Mrs. Sinclair, confidentially, ‘who was betrayed by the god Apollo.’

Mr. Saunders was conscious he had raised a smile. He considered it a full licence to proceed.

‘Well,’ he said, ‘as Miss Merton re-

marked a moment ago, some definite faith is needed by the world ; and, as I now deliberately declare, some definite faith it will have—some one definite faith that will tolerate no dissent from it ; and it will have this before fifty years are over.'

Everyone stared at Mr. Saunders, everyone except Mr. Luke, who simply smiled at the sky, and said, with an air of suppressed pleasantry, 'I had imagined that our young friend's motto was *freedom*.'

Mr. Saunders was nettled at this beyond description. With a vindictive quickness he fixed his eyes upon Mr. Luke.

'Sight is free,' he said, uttering his words very slowly, as if each one were a dagger in itself, and could give Mr. Luke a separate smart ; 'sight is free,' he said, 'and yet the sight of all healthy men, I conceive, is in agreement. It differs, I admit, when our eyes are dim with tears of hysterical feeling ; or when we are drunk ; or when we

are fighting—in this last case, Mr. Luke, I am told we are often visited with illuminations of a truly celestial radiance—but it is surely not such exceptional vision as this that you praise as free. And it is just the same,’ said Mr. Saunders triumphantly, ‘with the mind. The minds of men will never have been so free as on that not-distant day when they shall all agree. And what will that agreement result in? Why, in the utter banishment, the utter destruction—I know no word strong enough to express my meaning—of all mystery, and of all mysticism, and consequently, of that supposed inscrutable difference between right and wrong, which has been made, in the hands of the priests, one of the most hideous engines of terror that were ever employed to degrade and crush mankind. Right and wrong, indeed! Righteousness and morality! There is something insidious in their very sound. No — “useful,” “healthful,” “serviceable,”

“pleasant”—these will be the words of the future. Emancipated man will know no wrong, save unhealthiness, and unpleasantness. That most treacherous handmaid of priestcraft, poetry, which, professing to heighten the lights of life, did, in reality, only deepen its shadows, will delude him no longer—she will be gone—gone for ever. Science, the liberator of humanity, will have cast its light upon her ; and the lying vision will vanish. But why do I talk of poetry ? Is not that, and every other evil—reverence, faith, mysticism, humility, and all the unclean company—comprised in this one word, Religion. Well—let religion—the *ancien régime* of the world, retire as it has done, to its Versailles, and fence itself round for a little with its mercenary soldiers ! The Paris of the world is, at any rate, left free—and there the Revolution of Humanity is begun. Science leads it, and in another fifty years there will not be another religion

left. Surely most here must know this,' continued Mr. Saunders, 'although they may perhaps forget it sometimes. But the fact is notorious, and I really think——'

'Sir!'

Where did that sudden, solemn exclamation come from—that single syllable at which the music of Mr. Saunders's voice, 'like a fountain's sickening pulse,' retired in a moment. Who had spoken? The sound surprised everybody. It was Mr. Stockton—Mr. Stockton, with a face all aglow with feeling, beneath his picturesque wide-awake hat, and holding in his hand a white pocket-handkerchief bordered with pale blue.

'Perhaps,' he continued, looking slowly round him, 'I, as a man of science, who have been a patient apprentice at my work for six-and-twenty years, may be allowed to give some opinion on this matter. Destroy religion! Destroy poetry!' he exclaimed, in his rich, bell-like voice, that was now

resonant with an indignant melancholy. 'Will science destroy either of these precious and exquisite heritages of the human race? Will it extinguish one profound, one ennobling, one devout feeling? Will it blight that rich culture on which the present age so justly prides itself? I have followed science for six-and-twenty years, I speak therefore from experience; and I boldly answer "No." How indeed should it? I know, I deplore, and, I trust also forgive, the common notion that it does. But how can that notion have arisen? That is what puzzles me. Is not science essentially religious, essentially poetical—nay, does it not deepen quite boundlessly the religion and poetry already existing in the world, and fuse the two together, as they were never fused before? Does it narrow our notions of life's wonder and dignity to peer into the abyss of being, and learn something of the marvellous laws of things—

to discover the same mysterious Something in a snow-flake, in the scent of a rose, in the "topmost star of unascended heaven," and in some prayer or aspiration in the soul of man? True it is that this wondrous All is Matter, and that all matter is atoms in its last analysis. No idle metaphysics have clouded my brain, so I have been able to see these things clearly——'

'Yes, yes, yes,' cried Mr. Saunders, recovering himself, his voice tremulous with excitement, 'I know all that. I know that in their last analysis a pig and a martyr, a prayer and a beef-steak, are just the same—atoms and atomic movement. We, the younger generation of thinkers, accept all the premisses you give us without a moment's question. We only reason boldly and honestly on them, and I defy you to prove—Mr. Stockton, sir, if you will only listen to me——'

But there was little chance of that. Interrupted only for a moment, and whilst

Mr. Saunders was yet speaking, Mr. Stockton's eloquence swept on.

‘Consider ourselves,’ he said, ‘consider the race of men, and note the truly celestial light that science throws on that. We have ascended,’ said Mr. Stockton; ‘noble thought! We have not descended. We are rising towards heaven, we have not fallen from it. Yes—we, with attributes so like an angel's, with understanding so like a God's—to this height we have already risen. Who knows what future may not be in store for us? And then, on the other hand, when the awe-struck eye gazes, guided by science, through the “dark backward and abysm of time,” and sees that all that is has unfolded itself, unmoved and unbidden, (astounding thought!) from a brainless, senseless, lifeless gas—the cosmic vapour as we call it—and that it may, for aught we know, one day return to it—I say, when we realise, when we truly make our own, this stupendous truth, must not

our feelings,' said Mr. Stockton, letting his eyes rest on Miss Merton's with an appealing melancholy—'our feelings at such moments be religious? Are they not Religion?'

'But,' said Miss Merton, 'there is nothing religious *in* a gas. I don't see how anything religious can come out of it.'

'Perfectly right!' chuckled Mr. Saunders, faintly clapping his hands. 'Nothing can come out of the sack but what's in it. Miss Merton's perfectly right.'

'Ah, Miss Merton,' Mr. Stockton continued, 'don't be frightened by the mere sound of the word *matter*. For who knows what matter is'—('Then, why talk about it?' shrilled Mr. Saunders, unheeded)—'that great Alpha and Omega of the Universe?' Mr. Stockton went on. 'And don't wrong me by thinking that I "palter with you in a double sense," and that I am not using the word *religion* in its truest, its profoundest signification. Do you think, Miss Merton,

for instance, that I cannot feel with you, when, stirred to your inmost soul by some strain of Mozart or Beethoven, you kneel before your sacrificial altar, whilst the acolyte exalts the Host, and murmur with bowed head your litany to 'your beautiful Virgin? I say advisedly, Miss Merton, that I, as a man of science, can appreciate, and to a great extent share, your adoring—your adorable frame of mind.'

Mr. Stockton paused. His acquaintance with Catholic ritual, and the fact of thus finding herself elected, without any merit of her own, as the special object of so great a man's eloquence, produced in Miss Merton an unfortunate sense of absurdity, and in another moment she was conscious of nothing but a most inappropriate desire to laugh. She compromised with her facial muscles, however, and only gave a smile, which she trusted would pass muster as one of grave enquiry. Mr. Stockton thought that it was so, and

went on ; but, unknown to himself, he felt all the while that it was not so, and his enthusiasm, he could not tell why, became somewhat more polemical.

‘Does science, then,’ he proceeded, ‘rob us of one iota of religious feeling, or degrade our notions of life’s measureless solemnity? Nay, it is rather the flippant conceptions of theology that would do that, by connecting everything with an eternal Personality—a personality so degraded as to have some connection with ourselves. The prayer of the theologian “cabined, cribbed, confined” in spoken words, is directed to a Being that Science can make no room for, and would not want, if she could. The prayer of the man of science, for the most part of the silent sort, is directed whither? demands what? He is silent if you ask him, for his answer would be beyond the reach of words. Even to hint at its nature he would feel were a profanity.’

‘Do you know, Mr. Stockton,’ said Miss Merton, this time with a polite meekness, ‘all this rather bewilders me.’

‘And so it does me,’ said Mr. Stockton, much pleased with Miss Merton’s manner, ‘and this august bewilderment, which gives fulness and tone to our existence, but which we can neither analyse nor comprehend—to me comes in one shape, to you in another, and is—religion. In the name, then, of all genuine science, and of all serious scientific men, let man keep, I say,’ said Mr. Stockton, looking round him, ‘this precious and ennobling heritage—let him keep it and shape it ever anew, to meet his ever-changing and deepening needs. In *my* dream of the future I see religions not diminished, but multiplied, growing more and more richly diverse, as they sink deeper into individual souls. Surely, science, then, is not come to destroy the past, but to fulfil it—and I confess, I can myself see no better way of discovering what

we desire in the future than by the charming analysis Mr. Laurence has been giving us of what we most admire in the present.'

'See,' said Donald Gordon softly, 'here is science on the one side offering us all religions, and on the other none.'

'Heigho!' sighed Mr. Luke, very loud; 'let us agree about *conduct* first, and quarrel about theology afterwards.'

'Precisely,' resumed Mr. Stockton, to Mr. Luke's extreme annoyance—Mr. Luke himself having still much to say, and considering that Mr. Stockton did but darken counsel by interrupting him—'Mr. Luke is perfectly right.' ('I should like to know how you know that,' thought Mr. Luke.) 'Let us agree about conduct—morality, by-the-by, is the plainer word—that is the great thing. Let us agree about the noble and the beautiful. Let us agree heroically to follow truth—aye, truth; let us follow that, I say, picking our way step by step, and not look where we

are going. Let us follow—what can I add to this?—the incomparable life of the great Founder of Christianity. Yes, Miss Merton, entertaining the views that I do, I say the incomparable life. Such is the message of science to the world ; such is the instinct of culture when enriched and quickened by science.'

This was literally taking the bread out of Mr. Luke's mouth. Not only was it repeating what he had said before, but it was anticipating, in a formless undisciplined way, the very thing that he was going to say again. And the man who had robbed him thus was a mere Philistine—a mere man of science, who was without even a smattering of Greek or Hebrew, and who thought sensori-motor nerves and spontaneous generation more important subjects than Marcion's Gospel or the Psalms of David. For once in his life Mr. Luke was for the moment completely silenced. Laurence however somewhat

soothed him, by replying to him, not to Mr. Stockton,

‘Yes, I believe I was wrong after all ; and that true culture will really prevent us from looking on life as a mere mockery.’

Mr. Luke was going to have answered ; but, worse even than Mr. Stockton’s, Mr. Saunders’s hated accents now got the start of him.

‘One word more,’ Mr. Saunders exclaimed, ‘one plain word if you will allow me. All this talk about Religion, Poetry, Morality, implies this—or it implies nothing—the recognition of some elements of inscrutable mystery in our lives and conduct ; and to every mystery, to all mystery, science is the sworn, the deadly foe. What she is daily more and more branding into man’s consciousness, it is that nothing is inscrutable that can practically concern man. Use, pleasure, self-preservation—on these everything depends ; on these rocks of ages are all rules of

conduct founded : and now that we have dug down to these foundations, what an entirely changed fabric of life shall we build upon them. Right and wrong, I again say, are entirely misleading terms ; and the superstition that sees an unfathomable gulf yawning between them is the great bar to all healthful progress.'

'And I say on the contrary,' said Laurence, replying very suavely to Mr. Saunders's vehemence, 'that it is on the recognition of this mysterious and unfathomable gulf that the whole of the higher pleasures of life depend—and the higher vicious pleasures as much if not more than the virtuous.'

Lady Ambrose started at this.

'I am not vicious,' said Mr. Saunders, snappishly. 'When I call pleasure the one criterion of action, I am thinking of very different pleasures from what you think I mean.'

‘What is Mr. Saunders’s notion of the most passionate pleasure?’ said Mrs. Sinclair, bewitchingly.

‘I agree with my great forerunner Hobbes,’ said Mr. Saunders, ‘that the strongest of all pleasures are those arising from the gratification of curiosity; and he is the real ethical philosopher who subordinates all other appetites to this, like Bacon, who lost his life through pursuing a scientific experiment, or’—he said pausing to think of another example—

‘Like Bluebeard’s wives?’ enquired Mrs. Sinclair, naïvely. ‘I’m afraid I never give my husband his highest pleasure; for I never let him,’ she added in a regretful whisper, ‘open my letters, although I read all his. But Mr. Saunders,’ she said, ‘if you are so fond of curiosity, you must have some mystery to excite it.’

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Saunders, ‘but mystery is

a fox for us to hunt and shoot ; not a God to hunt and shoot us.'

'Fancy,' exclaimed Lady Ambrose in horror, 'shooting a fox! what sacrilege!'

This remark, so entirely spontaneous, and so entirely unexpected, produced a general laugh, in which all joined but Mr. Saunders himself, and Mr. Herbert.

'Well,' said Laurence at length, when the chorus had subsided, 'may I read a certain letter of my uncle's to myself, which is printed in this very book I have here? It was running in my mind just now, and is about the very matter we were speaking of—the connection of religions, of Christian morality, with all the higher pleasure of life.'

'Very good,' said Mr. Saunders. 'Read what you please. I can only say that I have at this moment in my portmanteau an analysis I have made of all the Christian moral sentiments, in which I trace every one of them to such disgusting or paltry origins

as shall at once rob them of all their pestilent *prestige*. I begin with the main root, the great first parent of all these evils, the conception of God, which I show may have arisen in seventy-three different ways, each one more commonplace than the other. By-and-bye, if you will not fear to confront the document, I will show it to you.'

Mr. Luke meanwhile had seen his way to bringing Mr. Stockton's true ignorance home to him, and had been regretting to him in tones of insidious confidence, that hardly enough stress had been laid just now on the necessity of really wide reading—'an intimacy,' said Mr. Luke, 'with the great literatures of the world—a knowledge and comparison of the best things that have been said and thought, in all the various ages, on the great questions of life, without which,' he added, 'as you and I know, that discrimination between right and wrong that we were speaking of just now, can never be anything

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more than a make-believe.' Nor did Mr. Luke seem at all aware as he was thus proceeding, that Laurence had found his place, and had already begun to read, as follows :

'As I grow old, my dear Otho, I am coming to think over many things that I have hitherto thought too little about ; and, amongst others, the great mystery of Christianity.'

At this point, however, Laurence and Mr. Luke were both interrupted by an entirely unforeseen event.





CHAPTER IV.

LAURENCE had just got to the end of the first sentence, and Mr. Luke at the same time was just reminding Mr. Stockton with some unction how impossible it was for us to value properly that curious mixture of trumpery and elevation, the 'Apocalypse' of John, unless we compared it with a very kindred work, the 'Pastor' of Hermas, when a servant startled Laurence by announcing in his ear the arrival of the vicar of the parish.

Everyone in dismay looked ; and there, standing a pace away in the background, the stranger was. He was an old man, very

tall and spare, with an ascetic aspect, but with a carriage dignified though slightly stooping, and with severe, piercing eyes. The sudden embarrassment, however, which his apparition seemed to cause the party was relieved somewhat by Laurence's taking him aside as if for some private conversation, and also by another arrival of a far more genial nature—that of servants with tea, piles of strawberries, iced coffee, and champagne cup. Mr. Rose at once bought himself golden opinions of Lady Grace by helping her page, a pretty boy with light curling hair, to arrange some tumblers on the grass. Mr. Stockton felt his spirits suddenly rise, and began asking Lady Violet what she thought of their New Republic as far as they had got with it.

‘I don't know,’ she answered petulantly. ‘As far as I can see, you want everyone to read a great many books and to have only one opinion. For my part, I hate people

who do the one, and a society that does the other.'

'What a charming girl Lady Violet is!' said Mr. Stockton to Lady Grace, as he stood by the tea table. '*Such* penetration! *such* vivacity! *such* originality!'

'What beautiful sermons he does preach, to be sure!' murmured Lady Ambrose.

'Who? Who?' enquired several voices.

'Why, Dr. Seydon,' said Lady Ambrose. 'Don't you know him? Have you never heard him in London—the gentleman with Mr. Laurence? See, he is coming back again to have some tea.'

It was indeed but too true. Mr. Luke's face in especial grew very blank. Mr. Saunders clenched his fist—a small one.

Dr. Seydon's face, on the contrary, wore what for it was a really gracious smile. He was mindful of how upon his arrival he had overheard the words 'Apocalypse' and 'mystery of Christianity.'

As Laurence introduced him into the circle Lady Ambrose at once claimed acquaintance with him, and made room for him at her side.

‘I am sorry,’ he said, looking round him with a singularly dignified, almost condescending courteousness, ‘to disturb in this way your Sunday’s reading. But I can but stay a few moments. I shall not interrupt you long.’

‘We have been talking a good deal,’ said Laurence, ‘about the signs of the times.’

‘And,’ said Lady Ambrose eagerly, feeling herself near a friend, ‘about all this wicked infidelity and irreligion that is so much about in the world now.’

‘Ah, yes,’ said Dr. Seydon slowly, and with a sudden frown, ‘it is true, unhappily, that there is, or has been much of that in our century. But what remains is confined, I imagine (and that is sad enough, God knows) to the half educated artisans in our large

towns, whom the Church in former years, alas! relaxed her hold on. For I fear I cannot deny that we, in this matter, are not wholly guiltless. The Church, we may depend upon it, has much to answer for.'

'Perfectly true, my dear sir! perfectly true,' exclaimed Mr. Luke, who could never resist assenting to this sentiment.

Dr. Seydon darted a quick glance at Mr. Luke, as if he were anything but pleased at finding himself so readily agreed with.

'But,' he went on, 'matters are fast assuming a more satisfactory appearance; and the great advance made in true education, and the liberal spirit that this brings with it, cannot fail to lead to that great change in our position that we so much desiderate.'

'Quite so,' said Mr. Luke, 'The true reading of ecclesiastical history——'

'Ah!' exclaimed Dr. Seydon, holding up his forefinger, 'exactly so. You have hit upon the right thing there.' ('Good gracious!')

thought Mr. Luke, astounded at this patronising compliment, 'I should think I had.') 'Could we but get both the parties,' Dr. Seydon went on, addressing Mr. Luke across Lady Ambrose, 'to understand fairly the history of the important era, the matter would, I think, be as good as settled. You see,' he said, turning to Lady Ambrose, 'if the Easterns will merely face steadily the pregnant fact that Michael Cerularius, in his first letter to Leo IX., in 1053, took absolutely no exception to any one point in Western doctrine, but simply to certain secondary points of discipline, they will see that the gulf that separates us is very slight when viewed by the clearer light of modern thought. I think,' he added, 'that I saw Lady Ambrose's name amongst the subscribers to the Eastern Church Union Association.'

'Oh yes,' said Lady Ambrose, 'certainly. I do so wish that some union could be

brought about. For the Greek Church, you know, certainly have the Apostolical Succession ; and then if we were only joined with them, the Roman Catholics could never deny our orders—not,' she added, with a most cordial smile to Dr. Seydon, 'that I don't myself believe implicitly in them, as it is.'

A rapid frown gathered itself on Dr. Seydon's brow.

'The denial of them,' he said severely, 'hurts the Romanists far more than it does us. As to the Greeks, what I was going to say was this. Let them just cast their eyes back so far as the tenth century, and they will see, and pray mark this, all of you,' he said, holding up his forefinger, and shaking it several times, 'for this is very important—I say the Greeks will see, unless they are determined to close their eyes, that at the time of the great rupture with the West, they did actually acknowledge the entire soundness of our confession of faith ; the main point they

objected to, and which they thought fit ground then for separation, being that the Western Church did not sing Alleluiah in Lent, and that it used in the Lord's Supper unleavened bread, which, Nicetas Pectoratus contended in an elaborate treatise, was dead bread, and could not therefore be either supersubstantial or consubstantial to us. It has been the fault of the Easterns in fact to be ever oversubtle, and to fall into those excesses of human wisdom which are foolishness with God. Isaac the Armenian, for instance, wrote a book to prove his countrymen in heresy for twenty-nine different reasons, of which the two most important are these—*that they did not blow on baptised persons, and that they made their consecrated oils of rapeseed and not of olives.* But two causes seem to me to be now working together, under God, to put the Easterns into a more becoming spirit, and to make them more heartily willing to join us. These are—I

have mentioned them in the third volume of my "History of the *Filioque* Clause"—first, that the genuine Greek blood is becoming daily more adulterated, and the Greek intellect losing therefore its old subtlety ; and secondly, that the political disturbance that now seems imminent in the East, will distract them from abusing such subtlety as they still possess. We shall therefore meet on the broad ground of our fundamental agreements, and once let the moral influence of the two churches, the Greek and English, be mutually augmented by an open union, in another five years, I imagine, we shall have heard the last of infidelity, in England at least, or indeed of Romanism either.'

'Now that's the sort of man,' said Lady Ambrose, as soon as Dr. Seydon had departed, 'that I should like to have for my clergyman in our New Republic.'

'Seydon !' exclaimed Mr. Luke, 'so that is he, is it ? I thought I remembered that

face of his. Of course—I remember now, seeing that his college had given this living to him.'

'It was he,' said Laurence to Miss Merton, 'who, some years ago, prevented Dr. Jenkinson being made a bishop, which he said, though it might be a compliment to learning, would be a grievous insult to God.'

'And so, Lady Ambrose,' said Mr. Stockton, 'you would like Dr. Seydon for a clergyman! Well, in our ideal society you would be able to have any clergyman you chose—any religion you chose—any which most satisfied your own conscience.'

'Oh, very well,' said Lady Ambrose, 'if it would not interfere with one's religion in any way, I think all this culture and enlightenment most delightful.'

'It will bind us to nothing,' said Mr. Stockton, 'except to a recognition of nobleness, of morality, of poetry. What Mr.

Laurence has offered to read to us is an account of how all of these are bound up in religion in *my* sense of the word.'

'Come, Mr. Laurence,' said Lady Ambrose, 'please go on. It is wonderful,' she added in a solemn whisper, 'how even bad men, like old Mr. Laurence, know at heart how it is really best to be good, and to believe in true religion.'

'*As I grow old, my dear Otho,*' Laurence again began to read, '*I am coming to think over many things that I have hitherto thought too little about, and amongst others, the great mystery of Christianity. I am coming to see, that, from a too superficial way of looking at it, I have done this religion a gross injustice, and have blindly failed to recognise how much of all that we hold most precious in life is dependent on its severe and unbending systems of theology and morals. It will perhaps strike you that it is rather late in the day for me to pay my tribute to these,*

now that the world at large is theoretically denying the former of them, and is practically forgetting the latter. But it is this very fact that induces me to speak out—the growing licence and the growing scepticism of modern society. I wish to raise my voice against the present state of things, and to warn the world that if it goes on much longer as it is going on now, it will soon have irremediably ruined all the finer and more piquant flavours of life, and that soon there will be actually nothing left to give rational zest to this poor pitiful existence of ours.

‘ You know what an admirer I have always been, in many ways, of the ancients, and how, in many ways, I think modern civilisation barbarous as compared with theirs. I have not changed this opinion. I have only come lately to understand what it means. The charm of ancient life lies mainly in its form. In essence, the life open to us is, as I fully see now, infinitely superior. And to

what is this superiority due? Simply to Christianity. It came with Christianity, and it will also go with it.

'I am not mad, Otho. Listen to me a little longer, my boy, and you will see my meaning.

'To begin then—just consider the one matter of humour. Compare the ancient humourists with the modern. Think for a moment of Lucian, of Aristophanes, of Plautus, of Petronius, of Horace; then think of Erasmus, Swift, Cervantes, Voltaire, Sterne. Does not the mere memory of the two sets of names bring home to you what a gulf in this matter there is between the ancient world and the modern? Is not the modern humour an altogether different thing from the ancient—broader and deeper beyond comparison or measurement? The humour of the ancients could raise a laugh; true—that is just what it could raise, and a laugh could express all the feelings raised by it. Think of the in-

tolerable vulgarity of Homer's gods, who "laughed consumedly" at Vulcan, as he waited on them,—why? because he was lame. The sense of humour on Olympus was about equal to what it would be now in a country lawyer's parlour. Think of Horace, who saw in a dull pun on two proper names, a joke so excellent that he wrote a whole satire in honour of it. It is true that Juvenal showed a somewhat finer sense, when he said that when Fortune was pleased to be facetious, she made a nouveau riche; Petronius, perhaps, was even in advance of Juvenal. But ancient humour at its best was a shallow thing. It meant little. It was like the bright sparkle on a brawling stream, hardly ankle-deep. But our modern humour is like the silent snake-like lights in a still water, that go coiling down into depths unfathomable, as it lures our thoughts onwards to the contemplation of endless issues. The twinkle in the eyes of a Sterne or a Cervantes seems to hint to us of

Eleusinian mysteries with a triumphant solemn treachery; and wakes our souls, as we catch it, into a sudden thrill of delicious, furtive insight. Such humour as this may excite laughter; but no laughter can ease our feelings fully—they also demand tears; and even tears are not enough for us. Of such humour as this the ancients had hardly a notion; it differs from theirs as the man differs from the baby, and seems almost like a new sense, peculiar to the modern world.

‘Now to what is this development of humour due—this new and exquisite source of pleasure? Simply, as you must see, if you look into the matter, to that much maligned thing, Christianity, and that marvellous system of moral laws and restraints which, although accredited through imposture, elaborated by barbarism, and received by credulity, has entirely changed the whole complexion of life. Think how it has done this. It has slowly permeated and penetrated all man’s

*inner existence. It has given him new un-
earthly aims; it has given him new un-
earthly standards by which to measure
every action. It has cunningly associated
everything with the most awful or the most
glittering conceptions with which the imagi-
nation can scare or intoxicate itself—with
Hell, Heaven, Judgment, and so forth: and
thus there is scarcely a single choice or refusal
that has been left indifferent, and not more or
less nearly connected with the most stupendous
issues. The infinitely beautiful, the infinitely
terrible, the infinitely hateful meet us every-
where. Everything is enchanted, and seems
to be what it is not. The enchantment quite
deludes the vulgar; it a little deludes the
wise; but the wise are for ever in various
ways secretly undoing the spell, and getting
glimpses of things as they really are. What
a delight these glimpses are to those that get
them! Here lies the sense of humour—in the
detection of truth through revered and reign-*

ing falsehood. Think of the colloquies of Erasmus, and his Laus Stultitiæ—there is an instance for you. Think of Don Quixote—there is another. All its humour is due to Christian dreams of honour, duty and chivalry. Who, again, would have cared for Swift's showing us that man was hateful, if Christ had not bewitched us into thinking that man was loveable. Gulliver owes its point to the Gospels. Sterne sees everything "big with infinite jest." But why? Because Christianity has made everything big also with infinite solemnity. A possible moral meaning is secreted over the whole surface of life, like the scented oil in the cells on the surface of an orange skin. The humourist catches the perfume of these volatile oils, as they are crushed out and wasted by our every action.

' Think, too, by the way, of the kindred subject of wit. I was reading a play of Congreve's yesterday: and this made me reflect how nearly all the brightest wit of the modern

world consists in showing us this one thing—that fidelity in marriage is ridiculous; that is, in showing us what but for Christianity no one would ever have doubted. Such wit is, as it were, the forbidden kiss we give to common sense, from which an angry religion has been bent on separating us.

‘Think, too, of that flower of Christian civilisation, the innuendo. That is simply the adroit saying under difficulties of what, but for Christianity, everyone would have taken for granted.

‘Here, then, you see, are the wit, the innuendo, the humour of the world, all owing their existence, or, at any rate, their flavour, to Christianity. And what would life, what would conversation be without these? But it is not these only that we owe to the same source. All our finer pleasures are indebted for their chief taste to it likewise. Love in itself, for instance, is, as everyone knows who has felt it, the coarsest and most foolish of all

our feelings. Leave it free to do what it pleases, and we soon cease to care what it does. But Christianity, with a miraculous ingenuity, has confined and cramped it into so grotesque and painful a posture, and set such vigilant guardians to keep it there, that any return to its natural freedom is a rapture, an adventure, and a triumph, which none but the wisest and most skilful can compass with grace or safety, and which wise men, therefore, think worth compassing. It is indeed the same with all the natural and true pleasures of life—poor tasteless things not worth living for, in themselves; but they have been so hidden away from us, and have come to be in such bad odour with the world, that only the wisest—for wisdom is but the detection of falsehood—see that they may be taken, and have the courage to take them; and the wisdom they are conscious of in doing this, forms a delicious sauce piquante—(of which humour, wit, and so on, are some of the flavours)—to

these same poor pleasures, that can give us a real zest for them.

'Such a life of wisdom is, of course, only for the few. The wise must always be few, as the rich must. The poor must make fine food for the rich to eat. The fools must make fine follies for the wise to detect. We cannot all be happy in a rational way. It is at least best that some of us should be. But what I want to point out to you, my boy, is that if society goes on as it is going on now, nobody will be able soon to be rationally happy at all. It is true that I do not now live much in the world; but I have sufficient means of seeing the course it is taking. I, like Hamlet, have heard of its "paintings," how it "jigs and ambles and lisps, and nick-names God's creatures." I know how fast all Christian moral sentiment is silently dying out of it. Indeed, so rapid do I imagine to be the way in which it is losing all proper feeling, that I should not be surprised were society in

another five years, if I am not dead by that time, to receive me back again. Now as long as Christianity was firmly fixed as a faith, we might amuse ourselves by offending against its morals as much as we liked; for our acts were in no danger of losing their forbidden character. There would always be a persecution, under which pleasure might thrive. But now, since faith is dead, we have only the moral sentiments left to us; and if we once get rid of these by a too reckless violation of them, the whole work of Christianity, which I have been trying to explain to you, will be undone. Wit and humour, love and poetry, will all alike have left us. Life will have lost its seasonings and its sauces: and served up to us au naturel it will only nauseate us. Man, indeed, will then be only separated from the animals by his capacity for ennui.

‘I had once hoped that the middle classes—that vast and useless body, who have neither

the skill that produces their wealth, nor the taste that can enjoy it—might have proved themselves at least of some use, by preserving the traditions of a sound, respectable morality; that they might have kept alive the nation's power of being shocked and scandalised at wit, or grace, or freedom. But no; they too are changed. With awkward halting gait they are waddling in the footsteps of their betters, and they will soon have made vice as vulgar as they long ago made virtue.

'To me, of course, all this matters little. Such flavours as life has, have lasted me thus far; nor will the world's growing blankness affect me. I shall never look into a woman's eyes again. One of my own is blind now, and the other is so dim that I doubt if the best paid beauty could contrive to look into it with more than an ironical tenderness. All this matters nothing to me. But you, my boy—what will be left for you, when I am taken away from the evil that is to come? Your

prospect does not seem to me a cheerful one. But alas ! I can offer no remedy. I can only beguile my time by warning you. At any rate, it is always good to think a little about the roots of things : so I trust you will be in some way profited by these patruæ verbera linguæ.'

When Laurence closed the book there was a silence of some moments, as if no one knew exactly how to take what had just been read. But at last Donald Gordon exclaimed, in his devoutest of soft whispers : ' Is Saul also among the prophets ? ' The words acted like a spell ; the ice was broken, and Mr. Herbert, who hitherto hardly uttered a syllable the whole afternoon, now broke out suddenly in his most emphatic accents.

' Thank you, my dear Laurence,' he exclaimed ; ' thank you much, indeed. There is something in what you have just read us that seems to me quite precious and peculiar. Nor do I find any such honesty in any creed

sung by priest in churches, as I do in this sardonic confession of that great truth, which the present age as a whole is resolutely bent upon forgetting—that the grand knowledge for a man to know is the essential and eternal difference between right and wrong, between base and noble ; that there *is* a right and a noble to be striven for, not for the sake of its consequences, but in spite of them ; and that it is this fact alone which, under countless forms, is the one thing affirmed in all human art and implied in all serviceable learning. Your Cervantes smiles it to you ; your Swift curses it to you ; your Bernard of Morlaix hymns it to you ; your saddened Shakespeare tells it to you in every way. Strange, indeed is it, and mournful, that we see a time when the one truth that we live and die by not only needs to be pointed out to us, but asserted passionately in the teeth of those whom we have elected as our wisest teachers.’ Mr. Saunders at once took this to be a special

allusion to himself, and his face involuntarily began to array itself in a smile of triumph. 'However,' Mr. Herbert went on benignantly, 'you have truly gone the right way to work in constructing an ideal society, if you make it recognise this before all things, and see how witness is borne to it by every pleasure and every interest of life.'

'Ah yes,' exclaimed Mr. Stockton, 'it is just this noble discrimination between right and wrong, Mr. Herbert, that modern enlightenment will so preeminently encourage and foster. Morality is quite indispensable to any dream of the future. And as to religion—the motto of the future is freedom—holy, awful, individual, freedom. We shall each be free to choose or evolve the religion most profoundly suited to us.'

'Well,' said Lady Ambrose, 'as long as I may keep my own religion I shall be quite satisfied; and about other people, I really don't think I'm bigoted—not as long, you

know, as they belong to *some* church. But *religion* is the thing I want. Of course we *must* have morality. Mustn't we?' she added, with a half-puzzled expression, turning to Lady Grace.

'Must!' sighed Mrs. Sinclair. 'It's very easy to say *must*.'

'Of course we must,' said Lady Grace, cheerfully. 'My dear,' she went on, with a little kindly laugh towards Mr. Saunders, '*he* doesn't really doubt it.'

Mr. Saunders sprang to his feet as if an adder had stung him.

'What!' he exclaimed, standing in the centre of the group, and looking round him, 'and do I not really doubt that the degrading practice of prayer, the fetish-worship of celibacy, of mortification, and so forth—do I not doubt that the foul faith in a future life, the grotesque conceptions of the theological virtues, and that preposterous idol of the market-place, the sanctity of marriage,—do you think

I do not really doubt that we must retain these? Do you think, on the contrary, I do not know that they are already doomed? However,' here Mr. Saunders paused suddenly and again sat down on the grass, 'there is no need for me at this moment to destroy any cherished illusions; though I shall be happy to show my analysis of them that I spoke about just now to anyone who is not afraid to inspect it. I hear much said about tolerance, as a characteristic of your society. All I ask is, that you have the courage to extend your tolerance to me. Your New Republic may be full of illusions then. The great labour of destroying them will be positively *delicious* to me.'

'Well,' said Mr. Stockton, with a mixture of deference and patronage, 'and what does Miss Merton think?'

'Oh,' said Miss Merton with a slow smile, 'I am all in favour of toleration. I think that what I consider truth is quite good

enough to stand on its own merits, if unprejudiced eyes can only be got to see them. And I honestly do think, that with really high-breeding, and with what we apparently mean by culture, we should have at least one part of the world as good as we could wish it. But yet—' she added hesitating a little, ' we have surely settled only half the question yet. We have said a good deal about this wide and discerning taste that is to guide us. We have not said much yet about the particular things—the occupations, the duties, the pleasures, that it will lead us to choose.'

'No,' began Mr. Rose, 'I should like myself very much to say something as to that—as to the new pleasures that modern culture has made possible for us.'

'Suppose—' said Lady Ambrose with one of her most beaming smiles, as she pushed her hat away over the back of her head, 'suppose we talk of this by-and-bye—at dinner or in the evening. Let us just *enjoy* a little now. The air now is so truly delicious. It seems

quite like a sin, doesn't it, to think of going in to dinner by-and-bye.'

A happy thought struck Lady Grace.

'Suppose we have dinner out of doors, Otho,' she said, 'in the pavilion with the roses round it that you used to call the summer dining-room.'

This proposal was received with what was little short of rapture. 'That really would be too delightful!' exclaimed Lady Ambrose. 'And what place could sound more perfect for us to finish our New Republic in!' It was arranged accordingly.

'And now,' exclaimed Lady Ambrose to Laurence confidentially, as the conversation ceased to be general, 'I want you to let me have a look at that book of your uncle's. I have often heard it spoken about. Lord Heartpool had a copy, which he showed my poor father in Paris. Come, Mr. Laurence, you need not hold it back. I'm sure there's nothing in it that would do me any harm.'

‘Well—no,’ said Laurence; ‘in this volume I don’t think there is.’

‘Because what you read just now,’ said Lady Ambrose, ‘was all really in favour of goodness, though it is true I didn’t quite like the tone of some of it.’

‘What,’ interposed Mr. Rose, ‘is there another volume?’ I should much like to see that.’

‘I declare, Mr. Laurence,’ said Lady Ambrose, who had now got the book in her hand, ‘here’s something really quite pretty—at least I’ve only got as far as the first verse yet. It’s a little poem called “*To the Wife of an old Schoolfellow.*”’

‘Read it out to us—do,’ said Laurence, with a soft smile. ‘It will illustrate very well the letter we had just now.’

‘Do you know, I really think I *might* manage this,’ she said, ‘although I’m not in the least by way of being a reader out. Listen, then, and please don’t laugh at me.’

*Let others seek for wisdom's way
In modern science, modern wit,
I turn to love, for all that these,
These two can teach, is taught by it.*

*Yes all. In that first hour we met
And smiled and spoke so soft and long, love,
Did wisdom dawn ; and I began
To disbelieve in right and wrong, love.*

*Then, as love's gospel clearer grew,
And I each day your doorstep trod, love,
I learned that love was all in all,
And rose to disbelieve in God, love.*

*Yes, wisdom's book ; you taught me this,
And ere I half had read you through, love,
I learned a deeper wisdom yet—
I learned to disbelieve in you, love.*

*So now, fair teacher, I am wise,
And free : 'tis truth that makes us free, love.
But you—you're pale ! grow wise as I,
And learn to disbelieve in me, love.*

As Lady Ambrose had read on, her voice had grown more and more disapproving, and several times she had shown symptoms of being on the point of stopping.

‘I’ve no doubt it’s all very witty,’ she

said, putting down the book, which was eagerly caught up by Mr. Rose, 'but—but that sort of thing, you know,' she exclaimed at last, 'I think is rather better in the smoking room. However, I saw something next to those verses, that I think would suit Miss Merton. It seemed to be a sort of address to the Virgin Mary.'

Miss Merton looked a little embarrassed; Laurence looked astonished.

'Let me read it,' exclaimed Mr. Rose, rapidly turning over the pages. 'This must be what Lady Ambrose means, I think :—

*My own, my one desire,
Virgin most fair.'*

'Yes,' said Lady Ambrose, 'that's it.'

'Oh,' said Laurence, 'that is not my uncle's; it is mine. It is the earliest copy of verses I ever wrote. I was seventeen then, and by an odd freak my uncle printed them in the end of his own collection.'

Miss Merton's embarrassment in a great

measure disappeared. She looked interested; and Mr. Rose, in slow, suave tones went on to read :—

*Mine own, my one desire,
 Virgin most fair
 Of all the virgin choir.
 Hail, oh most pure, most perfect, loveliest one !
 Lo, in my hand I bear,
 Woven for the circling of thy long gold hair,
 Culled leaves and flowers, from places which the sun
 The spring long shines upon,
 Where never shepherd hath driven flock to graze,
 Nor any grass is mown ;
 But there sound through all the sunny sweet warm days,
 Mid the green holy place,
 The wild bee's wings alone.
 Yea, and with jealous care
 The maiden Reverence tends the fair things there,
 And watereth all of them with sprinkling showers
 Of pearled grey dew from a clear running river.
 Whoso is chaste of spirit utterly,
 May gather there the leaves and fruits and flowers—
 The unchaste, never.
 But thou, O goddess, and dearest love of mine—*

(' I don't at all approve of this,' murmured Lady Ambrose).

*Take, and about thine hair
 This anadem entwine—
 Take, and for my sake wear,*

*Who am more to thee than other mortals are,
Whose is the holy lot
As friend with friend to walk and talk with thee,
Hearing thy sweet mouth's music in mine ear,
But thee beholding not.*¹

‘Ah, they are sweet verses,’ said Mr. Rose; ‘a little too ascetic, perhaps, to be quite Greek. They are from Eurypides, I see—the address to Artemis of Hippolytus.’

‘Yes,’ said Laurence; ‘I don’t think I ever wrote any original poetry.’

‘It’s exactly like Mr. Laurence—that bit,’ whispered Mrs. Sinclair.

‘And now,’ said Mr. Rose, ‘as I suppose we shall ere long be all going to dress for dinner, I will go, Mr. Laurence, if you will let me, and examine that other volume you spoke of, of your uncle’s Miscellanies.’

Mr. Rose moved slowly away; and as he did so, there came the sound of the distant dressing-bell, which warned the whole party that it was time to be following his example.

¹ Eur. Hipp. v. 69—85.



BOOK IV.





CHAPTER I.

NO proposal could have been happier than Lady Grace's, of the garden banquet, in the pavilion. It seemed to the guests when they were all assembled there, that the lovely summer's day was going to close with a scene from fairy-land. The table itself, with its flowers, and glowing fruit, and its many-coloured Venetian glass, shone and gleamed and sparkled, in the evening light, that was turning outside to a cool mellow amber ; and above, from the roof, in which the dusk was already darkness, hung china lamps, in the shape of

green and purple grape-clusters, looking like luminous fruits stolen from Aladdin's garden. The pavilion, open on all sides, was supported on marble pillars, that were almost hidden in red and white roses. Behind, the eye rested on great tree-trunks, and glades of rich foliage; and before, it would pass over turf and flowers, till it reached the sea beyond, on which, in another hour, the faint silver of the moonlight would begin to tremble.

There was something in the whole scene that was at once calming and exhilarating; and nearly all present seemed to feel in some measure this double effect of it. Dr. Jenkinson had been quite restored by an afternoon's nap; and his face was now all a-twinkle with a fresh benignity, that had however, like an early spring morning, just a faint suspicion of frost in it. Mr. Storcks even was less severe than usual; and as he raised his champagne to his lips, he would at times look very nearly conversational.

‘My dear Laurence,’ exclaimed Mr. Herbert, ‘it really almost seems as if your visions of the afternoon had come true, and that we actually were in your New Republic already. I can only say that, if it is at all like this, it will be an entirely charming place—too charming perhaps. But now, remember this—you have but half got through the business to which you first addressed yourselves—that of forming a picture of a perfect aristocracy—an aristocracy in the true and genuine sense of the word. You are all to have culture, or taste. Very good, you have talked a great deal about that, and you have seen what you mean by it; and you have recognised, above all, that it includes a discrimination between right and wrong. But now, you with all this taste and culture—you gifted men and women of the nineteenth century,—what sort of things does your taste teach you to reach out towards? In what actions, and aims, in what affections and

emotions, would you place your happiness? That is what I want to hear—the practical manifestations of this culture.’

‘Ah,’ said Mr. Rose, ‘I have at this moment a series of essays in the press, which would go far towards answering these questions of yours. They do, indeed, deal with just this—the effect of the choicer culture of this century on the soul of man—the ways in which it endows him with new perceptions—how it has made him, in fact, a being altogether more highly organised. All I regret is, that these choicer souls, these *χαρίεντες*, are as yet like flowers that have not found a climate in which they can thrive properly. That mental climate will doubtless come with time. What we have been trying to do this afternoon is, I imagine, nothing more than to anticipate it in imagination.’

‘Well,’ said Mr. Herbert, with a little the tone of an inquisitor, ‘that is just what I have been asking. What will this climate be

like, and what will these flowers be like in this climate? How would your culture alter and better the present, if its powers were equal to its wishes?’

Mr. Rose’s soft lulling tone harmonised well with the scene and hour, and the whole party seemed willing to listen to him; or at any rate no one felt any prompting to interrupt him.

‘I can show you an example, Mr. Herbert,’ he said, ‘of culture demanding a finer climate, in—if you will excuse my seeming egoism—in myself. For instance, (to take the widest matter I can fix upon—the general outward surroundings of our lives), often, when I walk about London, and see how hideous its whole external aspect is, and what a dissonant population throng it, a chill feeling of despair comes over me. Consider how the human eye delights in form and colour, and the ear in tempered and harmonious sounds; and then think for a

moment of a London street ! Think of the shapeless houses, the forest of ghastly chimney-pots, of the hell of distracting noises made by the carts, the cabs, the carriages—think of the bustling, commonplace, careworn, crowds that jostle you—think of an omnibus—think of a four-wheeler——’

‘I often ride in an omnibus,’ said Lord Allen, with a slight smile to Miss Merton.

‘It is true,’ replied Mr. Rose, only overhearing the tone in which these words were said, ‘that one may ever and again catch some touch of sunlight that will for a moment make the meanest object beautiful with its furtive alchemy. But that is Nature’s work, not man’s ; and we must never confound the accidental beauty that Nature will bestow on man’s work even at its worst, with the rational and designed beauty of man’s work at its best. It is this rational human beauty that I say our modern city life is so completely wanting in ; nay, the look of out-of-

door London seems literally to stifle the very power of imagining such beauty possible. Indeed, as I wander along our streets, pushing my way among the throngs of faces—faces puckered with misdirected thought, or expressionless with none—barbarous faces set towards Parliament, or Church, or scientific lecture-rooms, or Government offices, or counting-houses—I say, as I push my way amongst all the sights and sounds of the streets of our great city, only one thing ever catches my eye, that breaks in upon my mood, and warns me I need not despair.’

‘And what is that?’ asked Allen, with some curiosity.

‘The shops,’ Mr. Rose answered, ‘of certain of our upholsterers and dealers in works of art. Their windows, as I look into them, act like a sudden charm on me—like a splash of cold water dashed on my forehead when I am fainting. For I seem there to have got a glimpse of the real heart of things ;

and as my eyes rest on the perfect pattern (many of which are really quite delicious; indeed, when I go to ugly houses, I often take a scrap of some artistic *crétonne* with me in my pocket as a kind of æsthetic smelling salts), I say, when I look in at their windows, and my eyes rest on the perfect pattern of some new fabric for a chair, or for a window-curtain, or on some new design for a wall-paper, or on some old china vase, I become at once sharply conscious, Mr. Herbert, that, despite the ungenial mental climate of the present age, strange yearnings for, and knowledge of, true beauty, are beginning to show themselves like flowers above the weedy soil; and I remember, amongst the roar and clatter of our streets, and the mad noises of our own times, that there is amongst us a growing number who have deliberately turned their backs on all these things, and have thrown their whole souls and sympathies into the happier art-ages of the past. They have

gone back,' said Mr. Rose, raising his voice a little, 'to Athens and to Italy, to the Italy of Leo and to the Athens of Pericles. To such men the clamour, the interests, the struggles of our own times, become as meaningless as they really are. To them the boyhood of Bathyllus is of more moment than the manhood of Napoleon. Borgia is a more familiar name than Bismarck. I know, indeed—and I really do not blame them—several distinguished artists who, resolving to make their whole lives consistently perfect, will, on principle, never admit a newspaper into their houses that is of later date than the times of Addison; and I have good trust that the number of such men is on the increase—men I mean,' said Mr. Rose, toying tenderly with an exquisite wine-glass of Salviati's, 'who with a steady and set purpose follow art for the sake of art, beauty for the sake of beauty, love for the sake of love, life for the sake of life.'

Mr. Rose's slow gentle voice, which was apt at certain times to become peculiarly irritating, sounded now like the evening air grown articulate, and had secured him hitherto a tranquil hearing, as if by a kind of spell. This however seemed here in sudden danger of snapping.

'What, Mr. Rose!' exclaimed Lady Ambrose, 'do you mean to say then the number of people is on the increase who won't read the newspapers?'

'Why, the men must be absolute idiots!' said Lady Grace, shaking her grey curls, and putting on her spectacles to look at Mr. Rose.

Mr. Rose however was imperturbable.

'Of course,' he said, 'you may have newspapers if you will. I myself always have them; though in general they are too full of public events to be of much interest. I was merely speaking just now of the spirit of the movement. And of that we must all

of us here have some knowledge. We must all of us have friends whose houses more or less embody it. And even if we had not, we could not help seeing signs of it—signs of how true and earnest it is, in the enormous sums that are now given for really good objects.'

'That,' said Lady Grace, with some tartness, 'is true enough, thank God!'

'But I can't see,' said Lady Ambrose, whose name often figured in the *Times*, in the subscription-lists of advertised charities—'I can't see, Mr. Rose, any reason in that why we should not read the newspapers.'

'The other day, for instance,' said Mr. Rose reflectively, 'I heard of eight Chelsea shepherdesses, picked up by a dealer, I really forget where—in some common cottage, if I recollect aright, covered with dirt, giving no pleasure to anyone—and these were all sold in a single day, and not one of them fetched less than two hundred and twenty pounds.'

‘*I* can’t help thinking they must have come from Cremorne,’ said Mrs. Sinclair softly.

‘But why,’ said Mr. Rose, ‘should I speak of particular instances? We *must* all of us have friends whose houses are full of priceless treasures such as these—the whole atmosphere of whose rooms really seems impregnated with art—seems in fact, Mr. Herbert, such an atmosphere as we should dream of for our New Republic.’

‘To be sure,’ exclaimed Lady Ambrose, feeling that she had at last got upon solid ground. ‘By the way, Mr. Rose,’ she said, with her most gracious of smiles, ‘I suppose you have hardly seen Lady Julia Hayman’s new house in Belgrave Square? I’m sure that would delight you. I should like to take you there some day, and show it to you.’

‘I have seen it,’ said Mr. Rose, with languid condescension. ‘It was very pretty, I thought—some of it really quite nice.’

This and the slight rudeness of manner it was said with, raised Mr. Rose greatly in Lady Ambrose's estimation, and she began to think with respect of his late utterances.

‘Well, Mr. Herbert,’ Mr. Rose went on, ‘what I want to say is this. We have here in the present age as it is, fragments of the right thing. We have a number of isolated right interiors ; we have a few, very few right exteriors. But in our ideal state, our entire city—our London—the metropolis of our society, would be as a whole as perfect as these fragments. Taste^m would not there be merely an indoor thing. It would be written visibly for all to look upon, in our streets, our squares, our gardens. Could we only mould England to our wishes, the thing to do, I am persuaded, would be to remove London to some kindlier site, that it might there be altogether born anew. I myself would have it taken to the south-west, and to the sea-

coast, where the waves are blue, and where the air is calm and fine, and there—'

'Ah me!' sighed Mr. Luke with a lofty sadness, '*cælum non animum mutant.*'

'Pardon me,' said Mr. Rose, 'few paradoxes—and most paradoxes are false—are, I think, so false as that. This much at least of sea-like man's mind has, that scarcely anything so distinctly gives a tone to it as the colour of the skies he lives under. And I was going to say,' he went on, looking out dreamily towards the evening waves, 'that as the imagination is a quick workman, I can at this moment see our metropolis already transplanted and rebuilt. I seem to see it now as it were from a distance, with its palaces, its museums, its churches, its convents, its gardens, its picture-galleries—a cluster of domed and pillared marble, sparkling on a gray headland. It is Rome, it is Athens, it is Florence, arisen and come to life again, in these modern days. The aloe-tree of beauty

again blossoms there, under the azure stainless sky.'

'Do you know, Mr. Rose,' said Lady Ambrose in her most cordial manner, 'all this is *very* beautiful ; and certainly no one can think London as it is more ugly than I do. That's natural in me, isn't it, being a denizen of poor prosaic South Audley Street as I am ? But don't you think that your notion is—it's very beautiful, I quite feel that—but don't you think it is perhaps a little too dream-like—too unreal, if you know what I mean ?'

'Such a city,' said Mr. Rose earnestly, 'is indeed a dream, but it is a dream which we might make a reality, would circumstances only permit of it. We have many amongst us who know what is beautiful, and who passionately desire it ; and would others only be led by these, it is quite conceivable that we might some day have a capital, the entire aspect of which should be the visible embo-

diment of our finest and most varied culture, our most sensitive taste, and our deepest æsthetic measure of things. This is what this capital of our New Republic must be, this dwelling-place of our ideal society. We shall have houses, galleries, streets, theatres, such as Giulio Romano or Giorgio Vasari, or Giulio Campi would have rejoiced to look at ; we shall have metal-work worthy of the hand of Ghiberti and the praise of Michel Angelo ; we shall rival Domenico Beccafumi with our pavements. As you wander through our thoroughfares and our gardens, your feelings will not be jarred by the presence of human vulgarity, or the desolating noise of traffic ; nor in every spare space will your eyes be caught by abominable advertisements of excursion trains to Brighton, or of Horniman's cheap tea. They will rest instead here on an exquisite fountain, here on a statue, here on a bust of Zeus or Hermes or Aphrodite, glimmering in a laurelled nook ; or on a

Mater Dolorosa looking down on you from her holy shrine ; or on the carved marble gate-posts of our palace gardens, or on their wrought iron or wrought bronze gates ; or perhaps on such triumphal arches as that which Antonio San Gallo constructed in honour of Charles V., and of which you must all remember the description given by Vasari. Such a city,' said Mr. Rose, ' would be the externalisation of the human spirit in the highest state of development that we can conceive for it. We should there see expressed openly all our appreciations of all the beauty that we can detect in the world's whole history. The wind of the spirit that breathed there, would blow to us from all the places of the past, and be charged with infinite odours. Every frieze on our walls, every clustered capital of a marble column, would be a garland or nosegay of associations. Indeed, our whole city, as compared with the London that is now, would be itself a nosegay

as compared with a faggot ; and as related to the life that I would see lived in it, it would be like a shell murmuring with all the world's memories, and held to the ear of the two twins, Life and Love.'

Mr. Rose had got so dreamy by this time that he felt himself the necessity of turning a little more matter-of-fact again.

'You will see what I mean, plainly enough,' he said, 'if you will just think of our architecture and consider how that naturally will be——'

'Yes,' said Mr. Luke, 'I should be glad to hear about our architecture.'

'—How that naturally will be,' Mr. Rose went on, 'of no style in particular.'

'The deuce it won't!' exclaimed Mr. Luke.

'No,' continued Mr. Rose, unmoved ; 'no style in particular, but a *renaissance* of all styles. It will matter nothing to us whether they be pagan or Catholic, classical or

mediæval. We shall be quite without prejudice or bigotry. To the eye of true taste, an Aquinas in his cell before a crucifix, or a Narcissus gazing at himself in a still fountain, are—in their own ways, you know—equally beautiful.’

‘Well, really,’ said Miss Merton, ‘I can *not* fancy St. Thomas being a very taking object to people who don’t believe in him either as a saint or a philosopher. I always think that, except from a Christian point of view, a saint can be hardly better described than by Newman’s lines, as—

A bundle of bones, whose breath
Infects the world before his death.’¹

‘I remember the lines well, said Mr. Rose calmly, ‘and the writer you mention puts them in the mouth of a yelping devil. But devils, as far as I know, are not generally—except, perhaps, Milton’s—conspicuous for

¹ Vide J. H. Newman’s *Dream of Gerontius*.

taste : indeed, if we may trust Goethe, the very touch of a flower is torture to them.'

'Dante's biggest devil,' cried Mr. Saunders, to everyone's amazement, 'chewed Judas Iscariot like a quid of tobacco, to all eternity. He, at any rate, knew what he liked.'

Mr. Rose started, and visited Mr. Saunders with a rapid frown. He then proceeded, turning again to Miss Merton as if nothing had happened.

'Let me rather,' he said, 'read a nice sonnet to you, which I had sent to me this morning, and which was in my mind just now. These lines'—Mr. Rose here produced a paper from his pocket—'were written by a boy of eighteen—a youth of extraordinary promise, I think, whose education I may myself claim, to have had some share in directing. Listen,' he said, laying the verses before him, on a clean plate.

*Three visions in the watches of one night
 Made sweet my sleep—almost too sweet to tell.
 One was Narcissus by a woodside well,
 And on the moss his limbs and feet were white;
 And one, Queen Venus, blown for my delight
 Across the blue sea in a rosy shell;
 And one, a lean Aquinas in his cell,
 Kneeling, his pen in hand, with aching sight
 Strained towards a carven Christ; and of these three
 I knew not which was fairest. First I turned
 Towards that soft boy, who laughed and fled from me;
 Towards Venus then; and she smiled once, and she
 Fled also. Then with teeming heart I yearned,
 O Angel of the Schools, towards Christ with thee!*

Yes,' murmured Mr. Rose to himself, folding up the paper; 'they are dear lines. Now, there,' he said, 'we have a true and tender expression of the really Catholic spirit of modern æstheticism, which holds nothing common or unclean. It is in this spirit, I say, that the architects of our state will set to work. And thus for our houses, for our picture-galleries, for our churches—I trust we shall have many churches—they will select and combine——'

'Do you seriously mean,' broke in Allen,

a little impatiently, 'that it is a thing to wish for and to look forward to, that we should abandon all attempts at original architecture, and content ourselves with simply sponging on the past?'

'I do,' replied Mr. Rose suavely; 'and for this reason, if for no other, that the world can now successfully do nothing else. Nor, indeed, is it to be expected or even wished that it should.'

'You say we have no good architecture now!' exclaimed Lady Ambrose; 'but, Mr. Rose, have you forgotten our modern churches? Don't you think them beautiful? Perhaps you never go to All Saints?'

'I every now and then,' said Mr. Rose, 'when I am in the weary mood for it, attend the services of our English Ritualists, and I admire their churches very much indeed. In some places the whole thing is really managed with surprising skill. The dim religious twilight, fragrant with the smoke of incense; the

tangled roofs that the music seems to cling to ; the tapers, the high altar, and the strange intonation of the priests, all produce a curious old-world effect, and seem to unite one with things that have been long dead. Indeed, it all seems to me far more a part of the past than the services of the Catholics.'

Lady Ambrose did not express her approbation of the last part of this sentiment, out of regard for Miss Merton ; but she gave a smile and a nod of pleased intelligence to Mr. Rose.

'Yes,' Mr. Rose went on, 'there is a regretful insincerity about it all, that is very nice, and that at once appeals to me, "*Gleich einer alten halbverklungenen Sage*." The priests are only half in earnest ; the congregations, even——'

'Then I am quite sure,' interrupted Lady Ambrose with vigour, 'that you can never have heard Mr. Cope preach.'

'I don't know,' said Mr. Rose languidly.

‘ I never enquired, nor have I ever heard anyone so much as mention, the names of any of them. Now all that, Lady Ambrose, were life really in the state it should be, you would be able to keep.’

‘ Do you seriously, and in sober earnest, mean,’ Allen again broke in, ‘ that you think it a good thing that all our art and architecture should be borrowed and insincere, and that our very religion should be nothing but a dilettante memory ? ’

‘ The opinion,’ said Mr. Rose, ‘ which by the way you slightly misrepresent, is not mine only, but that of all those of our own day who are really devoting themselves to art for its own sake. I will try to explain the reason of this. In the world’s life, just as in the life of a man, there are certain periods of eager and all-absorbing action, and these are followed by periods of memory and reflection. We then look back upon our past, and become for the first time conscious of what

we are, and of what we have done. We then see the dignity of toil, and the grand results of it, the beauty and the strength of faith, and the fervent power of patriotism ; which, whilst we laboured, and believed, and loved, we were quite blind to. Upon such a reflective period has the world now entered. It has acted and believed already ; its task now is to learn to value action and belief—to feel and to be thrilled at the beauty of them. And the chief means by which it can learn this is art—the art of a *renaissance*. For by the power of such art, all that was beautiful, strong, heroic, or tender in the past—all the actions, passions, faiths, aspirations of the world, that lie so many fathom deep in the years—float upwards to the tranquil surface of the present, and make our lives like what seems to me one of the loveliest things in nature, the iridescent film on the face of a stagnant water. Yes ; the past is not dead unless we choose that it shall be so. Chris-

tianity itself is not dead. There is "nothing of it that doth fade," but turns "into something rich and strange," for us, to give a new tone to our lives with. And, believe me,' Mr. Rose went on, gathering earnestness, 'that the happiness possible in such conscious periods is the only true happiness. Indeed, the active periods of the world were not really happy at all. We only fancy them to have been so by a pathetic fallacy. Is the hero happy during his heroism? No, but after it, when he sees what his heroism was, and reads the glory of it in the eyes of youth or maiden.'

'All this is very poor stuff—*very* poor stuff,' murmured Dr. Jenkinson, whose face had become gradually the very picture of crossness.

'Do you mean, Mr. Rose,' said Miss Merton, with a half humorous, half incredulous smile, 'that we never value religion till we have come to think it nonsense?'

‘Not nonsense—no,’ exclaimed Mr. Rose in gentle horror ; ‘I only mean that it never lights our lives so beautifully as when it is leaving them like the evening sun. It is in such periods of the world’s life that art springs into being in its greatest splendour. Your Raphael, Miss Merton, who painted you your “dear Madonnas,” was a luminous cloud in the sunset sky of the Renaissance,—a cloud that took its fire from a faith that was sunk or sinking.’

‘I’m afraid that the faith is not quite sunk yet,’ said Miss Merton, with a slight sudden flush in her cheeks, and with just the faintest touch of suppressed anger.

Mr. Saunders, Mr. Stockton, Mr. Storks, and Mr. Luke all raised their eyebrows.

‘No,’ said Mr. Rose, ‘such cyclic sunsets are happily apt to linger.’

‘Mr. Rose,’ exclaimed Lady Ambrose, with her most gracious of smiles, ‘of course everyone who has ears must know that all

this is very beautiful, but I am positively so stupid that I haven't been quite able to follow it all.'

'I will try to make my meaning clearer,' he said, in a brisker tone. 'I often figure to myself an unconscious period and a conscious one, as two women—one an untamed creature with embrowned limbs native to the air and the sea; the other marble-white and swan-soft, couched delicately on cushions before a mirror, and watching her own supple reflection gleaming in the depths of it. On the one is the sunshine and the sea-spray. The wind of Heaven and her unbound hair are playmates. The light of the sky is in her eyes; on her lips is a free laughter. We look at her, and we know that she is happy. *We* know it, mark me; but *she* knows it not. Turn, however, to the other, and all is changed. Outwardly, there is no gladness there. Her dark, gleaming eyes open depth within depth upon us, like the circles of a

new Inferno. There is a clear, shadowy pallor on her cheek. Only her lips are scarlet. There is a sadness—a languor, even in the grave tendrils of her heavy hair, and in each changing curve of her bosom as she breathes or sighs.’

‘What a very odd man Mr. Rose is!’ said Lady Ambrose in a loud whisper. ‘He always seems to talk of everybody as if they had no clothes on. And does he mean by this that we ought to be always in the dumps?’

‘Yes,’ Mr. Rose was meanwhile proceeding, his voice again growing visionary, ‘there is no eagerness, no action there; and yet all eagerness, all action is known to her as the writing on an open scroll; only as she reads even in the reading of it, action turns into emotion, and eagerness into a sighing memory. Yet such a woman really may stand symbolically for us as the patroness and the lady of all gladness, who makes us glad in the only

way now left us. And not only in the only way, but in the best way—the way of ways. Her secret is self-consciousness. She knows that she is fair ; she knows, too, that she is sad ; but she sees that sadness is lovely, and so sadness turns to joy. Such a woman may be taken as a symbol not of our architecture only, but of all the æsthetic surroundings with which we shall shelter and express our life. Such a woman do I see whenever I enter a ritualistic church——’

‘I know,’ said Mrs. Sinclair, ‘that very peculiar people do go to such places ; but, Mr. Rose,’ she said with a look of appealing enquiry, ‘I thought they were generally rather over-dressed than otherwise ?’

‘The imagination,’ said Mr. Rose, opening his eyes in grave wonder at Mrs. Sinclair, ‘may give her what garb it chooses. Our whole city, then—the city of our New Republic—will be in keeping with this spirit. It will be the architectural and decorative em-

bodiment of the most educated longings of our own times after order and loveliness and delight, whether of the senses or the imagination. It will be, as it were, a resurrection of the past, in response to the longing and the passionate regret of the present. It will be such a resurrection as took place in Italy during its greatest epoch, only with this difference——’

‘You seem to have forgotten trade and business altogether,’ said Dr. Jenkinson. ‘I think, however rich you intend to be, you will find that they are necessary.’

‘Yes, Mr. Rose, you’re not going to deprive us of all our shops, I hope?’ said Lady Ambrose.

‘Because, you know,’ said Mrs. Sinclair, with a soft maliciousness, ‘we can’t go without dresses altogether, Mr. Rose. And if I were there,’ she continued plaintively, ‘I should want a bookseller to publish the

scraps of verse—poetry, as I am pleased to call it—that I am always writing.’

‘Pooh!’ said Mr. Rose, a little annoyed, ‘we shall have all that somewhere, of course; but it will be out of the way, in a sort of Piræus, where the necessary *καπήλοι*——’

‘A sort of what?’ said Lady Ambrose.

‘Mr. Rose merely means,’ said Donald Gordon, ‘that there must be good folding-doors between the offices and the house of life; and that the servants are not to be seen walking about in the pleasure-grounds.’

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Rose, ‘exactly so.’

‘Well then,’ said Lady Ambrose, ‘I quite agree with you, Mr. Rose; and if wishing were only having, I’ve not the least doubt that we should all of us be going back to Mr. Rose’s city to-morrow, instead of to London, with its carts, and cabs, and smoke, and all its thousand-and-one drawbacks. I’m sure,’ she said, turning to Miss Merton, ‘you would, my dear, with all your taste.’

‘It certainly,’ said Miss Merton, smiling, ‘all sounds very beautiful. All I am afraid of is that we should not be quite worthy of it.’

‘Nay,’ said Mr. Rose, ‘but the very point is that we shall be worthy of it, and that it will be worthy of us. I said, if you recollect, just now, that the world’s ideal of the future must resemble in many ways its memory of the Italian Renaissance. But don’t let that mislead you. It may resemble that, but it will be something far in advance of it. During the last three hundred years—in fact, during the last sixty or seventy years, the soul of man has developed strangely in its sentiments and its powers of feeling; in its powers, in fact, of enjoying life. As I said, I have a work in the press, devoted entirely to a description of this growth. I have some of the proof sheets with me; and if you will let me I should like to read you one or two passages.’

‘I don’t think much can be made out of that,’ said Dr. Jenkinson, with a vindictive sweetness. ‘Human sentiment dresses itself in different fashions, as human ladies do ; but I think beneath the surface it is much the same. I mean,’ he added, suddenly recollecting that he might thus seem to be rooting up the wheat of his own opinions along with the tares of Mr. Rose’s, ‘I mean that I don’t think in seventy years, or even in three hundred, you will be able to show that human nature has *very* much changed. I don’t think so.’

Unfortunately, however, the Doctor found that, instead of putting down Mr. Rose by this, he had only raised up Mr. Luke.

‘Ah, Jenkinson, I think you are wrong there,’ said Mr. Luke. ‘As long as we recognise that this growth is at present confined to a very small minority, the fact of such growth is *the* most important, *the* most significant of all facts. Indeed our friend Mr.

Rose is quite right thus far, in the stress he lays on our appreciation of the past, that we have certainly in these modern times acquired a new sense, by which alone the past can be appreciated truly, the sense which, if I may invent a phrase for it, I should call that of Historical Perspective; so that now really for the first time the landscape of history is beginning to have some intelligible charm for us. And this, you know, is not all. Our whole views of things—(you, Jenkinson, must know this as well as I do)—the *Zeitgeist* breathes upon them, and they do not die; but they are changed—they are enlightened.'

The Doctor was too much annoyed to make any audible answer to this; but he murmured with some emphasis to himself, 'That's *not* what Mr. Rose was saying; that's *not* what I was contradicting.'

'You take, Luke, a rather more rose-coloured view of things than you did last night,' said Mr. Storks.

‘No,’ said Mr. Luke, with a sigh, ‘far from it. I am not denying (pray, Jenkinson remember this) that the majority of us are at present either Barbarians or Philistines ; and the ugliness of these is more glaring now than at any former time. But that any of us are able to see them thus distinctly in their true colours, itself shows that there must be a deal of light somewhere. Even to make darkness visible some light is needed. We should always recollect that. We are only discontented with ourselves when we are struggling to be better than ourselves.’

‘And in many ways,’ said Laurence, ‘I think the struggle has been successful. Take, for instance, the pleasure we get now from the aspects of external nature, and the way in which these seem to mix themselves with our lives. This certainly is something distinctly modern. And nearly all our other feelings, it seems to me, have changed just like this one, and have become more sensi-

tive, and more highly organised. If we may judge by its expression in literature, love has certainly; and that I suppose is the most important and comprehensive feeling in life.'

'Does Mr. Laurence only *suppose* that?' sighed Mrs. Sinclair, casting down her eyes.

'Well,' said Dr. Jenkinson, 'our feelings about these two things—about love and external nature—perhaps have changed somewhat. Yes, I think they have. I think you might make an interesting magazine article out of that—but hardly more.'

'I rather,' said Laurence, apologetically, 'agree with Mr. Luke and Mr. Rose, that all our feelings have developed just as these two have. And I think this is partly owing to the fusion in our minds of our sacred and secular ideas—which indeed you were speaking of this morning in your sermon. Thus, to find some rational purpose in life was once merely enjoined as a supernatural duty. In

our times it has taken our common nature upon it, and become a natural longing—though, I fear,’ he added, softly, ‘a fruitless one.’

‘Yes,’ suddenly exclaimed Lady Grace, who had been listening intently to her nephew’s words; ‘and if you are speaking of modern progress, Otho, you should not leave out the diffusion of those grand ideas of justice, and right, and freedom, and humanity which are at work in the great heart of the nation. We are growing cultivated in Mr. Luke’s noble sense of the word, and our whole hearts revolt against the way in which women have hitherto been treated, and against the cruelties which dogma asserts the good God can practise, and the cruelties on the poor animals which wicked men do practise. And war too,’ Lady Grace went on, a glow mounting into her soft faded cheek, ‘think how fast we are outgrowing that! England at any rate will never watch the

outbreak of another war, with all its inevitable cruelties, without giving at least one sob that shall make all Europe pause and listen. Indeed, we must not forget how the entire substance of religion is ceasing to be a mass of dogmas, and is becoming embodied instead in practice and in action.'

'Quite true, Lady Grace,' said Mr. Luke. Lady Grace was just about to have given a sign for rising; but Mr. Luke's assent detained her. 'As to war,' he went on, 'there may, of course, be different opinions. Questions of policy may arise——' ('As if any policy,' murmured Lady Grace, 'could justify us in such a thing!') 'but religion—yes, that, as I have been trying to teach the world, is the great and important point on which culture is beginning to cast its light—and with just the effect which you describe. It is true that culture is at present but a little leaven hid in a barrel of meal; but still it is doing its work slowly; and in the

matter of religion—indeed, in all matters, for religion rightly understood embraces all——’ (‘I *do* like to hear Mr. Luke talk sometimes,’ murmured Lady Grace), ‘its effect is just this—to show us that religion in any civilised, any reasonable, any sweet sense, can never be found except embodied in action; that it is, in fact, nothing but right action, pointed—winged, as it were—by right emotion, by a glow, an aspiration—an aspiration towards God——’ (Lady Grace sighed with feeling) —‘not of course,’ Mr. Luke went on confidentially, ‘that petulant Pedant of the theologians—that irritable angry Father, with the very uncertain temper—but towards——’

‘An infinite, inscrutable, loving Being,’ began Lady Grace, with a slight moisture in her eyes.

‘Quite so,’ said Mr. Luke, not waiting to listen, ‘towards that great Law—that great verifiable tendency of things—that great stream whose flowing such of us as are able

are now so anxiously trying to accelerate. There is no vain speculation about creation, and first causes, and consciousness here, which are matters we can never verify, and which matter nothing to us——’

‘But,’ stammered Lady Grace, aghast, ‘Mr. Luke, do you mean to say that—but it surely must matter something whether God can hear our prayers, and will help us, and whether we owe Him any duty, and whether He is conscious of what we do, and will judge us—it must matter——’

Mr. Luke leaned forwards towards Lady Grace, and spoke to her in a confidential whisper.

‘Not two straws—not that,’ he said with a smile, and a very slight flip of his finger and thumb.

Lady Grace was thunderstruck.

‘But,’ again she stammered, softly and eagerly, ‘unless you say there is no personal——’

Mr. Luke hated the word *personal*; it was so much mixed up in his mind with theology, that he even winced if he had to speak of personal talk.

‘My dear Lady Grace,’ he said, in tone of surprised remonstrance, ‘you are talking like a Bishop.’

‘Well, certainly,’ said Lady Grace, rising, and struggling, she hardly knew how, into a smile, ‘*nolo episcopari*. You see I do know a little Latin, Mr. Luke.’

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Luke with a bow, as he pushed back a chair for her, ‘and a bit that has more wisdom in it than all other ecclesiastical Latin put together.’

‘We’re going to leave you gentlemen to smoke your cigarettes,’ said Lady Grace. ‘We think of going down on the beach for a little, and looking at the sea, which is getting silvery; and by and bye, I daresay you will not expel us, if we come back for a little tea and coffee.’

‘Damn it!’

Scarcely had the last trailing skirt swept glimmering out of the pavilion into the mellow slowly-brightening moonlight, than the gentlemen were astounded by this sudden and terrible exclamation. It was soon found to have issued from Mr. Saunders, who had hardly spoken more than a few sentences during the whole of dinner.

‘What can be the matter?’ was enquired by several voices.

‘My fool of a servant,’ said Mr. Saunders sullenly, ‘has, I find, in packing, wrapped up a small sponge of mine in my disproof of God’s existence.’

‘H’f,’ shuddered Mr. Rose, shrinking from Mr. Saunders’s somewhat piercing tones, and resting his forehead on his hand, ‘my head aches sadly. I think I will go down to the sea, and join the ladies.’

‘I,’ said Mr. Saunders, ‘if you will excuse me, must go and see in what state the

document is, as I left it drying, hung on the handle of my jug.'

No sooner had Mr. Saunders and Mr. Rose departed than Dr. Jenkinson began to recover his equanimity somewhat. Seeing this, Mr. Storks, who had himself during dinner been first soothed and then ruffled into silence, found suddenly the strings of his tongue loosed.

'Now those are the sort of young fellows,' he said, looking after the retreating form of Mr. Saunders, 'that really do a good deal to bring all solid knowledge into contempt, in the minds of the half-educated. There's a certain hall in London, not far from the top of Regent Street, where I'm told he gives Sunday lectures.'

'Yes,' said Dr. Jenkinson, sipping his claret, 'it's all very bad taste—very bad taste.'

'And the worst of it is,' said Mr. Storks, 'that these young men really get hold of a

fact or two, and then push them on to their own coarse and insane conclusions—which have, I admit, to the vulgar eye, the look of being obvious.’

‘Yes,’ said Dr. Jenkinson, with a seraphic sweetness, ‘we should always suspect everything that seems very obvious. Glaring inconsistencies and glaring consistencies are both sure to vanish if you look closely into them.’

‘Now all that about God, for instance,’ Mr. Storks went on, ‘is utterly uncalled for ; and as young Saunders puts it, is utterly misleading.’

‘Yes,’ said Dr. Jenkinson, ‘it *all* depends upon the way you say it.’

‘I hardly think,’ said Mr. Stockton with a sublime weariness, ‘that we need waste much thought upon *his* way. It is a very common one—that of the puppy that barks at the heels of the master whose meat it steals.’

‘May I,’ said Mr. Herbert gently, after a moment’s pause, ‘ask this, for I am a little puzzled here. Do I understand that Mr. Saunders’s arguments may be held, on the face of the thing, to disprove the existence of God?’

Mr. Storks and Mr. Stockton both stared gravely on Mr. Herbert ; and said nothing. Dr. Jenkinson stared at him too ; but the Doctor’s eye lit up into a little sharp twinkle of benign content and amusement, and he said—

‘No, Mr. Herbert, I don’t think Mr. Saunders can disprove that, nor anyone else either. For the world has at present no adequate definition of God ; and I think we should be able to define a thing before we can satisfactorily disprove it. I think so. I have no doubt Mr. Saunders can disprove the existence of God, as he would define Him. All atheists can do that.’

‘Ah,’ murmured Mr. Stockton, ‘nobly said!’

‘But that’s not the way,’ the Doctor went on, ‘to set to work—this kind of rude denial. We must be loyal to nature. We must do nothing *per saltum*. We must be patient. We mustn’t leap at Utopias, either religious or irreligious. Let us be content with the knowledge that all dogmas will expand in proportion as we feel they need expansion; for all mere forms are transitory, and even the personality of——’

Fatal word! It was like a match to a cannon.

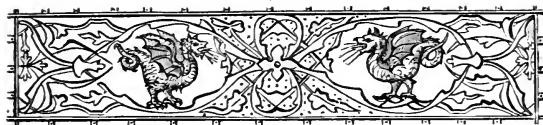
‘Ah, Jenkinson,’ exclaimed Mr. Luke, and Dr. Jenkinson stopped instantly, ‘*we* see what you mean; and capital sense it is too. But you do yourself as much as anyone else a great injustice, in not seeing that the age is composed of two parts, and that the cultured minority is infinitely in advance of the Philistine majority—which alone is, properly

speaking, the present; the minority being really the soul of the future waiting for its body, which at present can exist only as a Utopia. It is the wants of this soul that we have been talking over this afternoon. When the ladies come back to us, there are several things that I should like to say; and then you will see what we mean, Jenkinson—and that even poor Rose has really some right on his side.'

At the mention of Mr. Rose's name the Doctor's face again curdled into frost.

'I don't think so.' That was all he said.





CHAPTER II.

‘**W**E could really, Mr. Luke, almost fancy that we heard the Sirens singing, just now,’ said Mrs. Sinclair, when the ladies of the party had returned from their ramble on the shore, with Mr. Rose amongst them, like Apollo leading the Muses.

The coloured lamps were now glowing brightly, with their green and purple clusters ; the table was glittering under them, a wilderness of enchanted sparklings ; and outside the moonlight was bathing everything, the roof and pillars of the pavilion, the myrtles, and

the multitudes of crowding roses, which trembled just a little in the air that they themselves scented.

‘Yes,’ Mrs. Sinclair said, whilst there were some arrangements going on amongst the others with shawls and opera-cloaks, ‘I never saw anything like the sea to-night. Far off the spray amongst the rocks looked like mermaids playing; and at our feet it seemed as if the little pale waves were whispering and sighing messages to us. I don’t think I should like to tell quite all I thought they said to me. And listen,’ she cried with a faint sigh, ‘is not that the nightingale? It is—I am certain it is!—

The same that oft-times hath
Charmed magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in faëry lands forlorn.¹

What a night it is, to be sure! We all felt down on the beach as if we were literally

¹ Keats, *Ode to the Nightingale*

breathing in Romance—or—well, I don't know what the right word is.'

'And I,' said Mr. Rose, 'have been explaining to them, that had they lived in any other age, they would have felt nothing of all this; that they feel it, by virtue of senses that have only been acquired in ours.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Luke, clearing his throat; 'that's quite true, and I want now to try and explain clearly how and why it is true. I was particularly anxious,' he said in a whisper to Laurence as he drew his chair forward, 'to speak of this when your Roman Catholic friend was here; as she seems a very intelligent young lady, and is, I have no doubt, fully alive to some of the grotesquenesses of what she considers to be her creed.'

Mr. Luke resettled himself. On one side of him was Miss Merton, in a pale blue opera cloak, bordered with white fur, and embroidered with gold, something in her large eyes of a subdued sadness; and on the other side

was Mrs. Sinclair, all in white, who looked like a wood-anemone, against a background of dark foliage.

‘Now,’ Mr. Luke continued, raising his voice a little, but speaking with a more mellow persuasiveness than usual, ‘we all of us feel, in a general way—I think I may say that we nearly all of us feel—that the cultured minority of the present age is endowed with feelings, sentiments, and powers of insight, not only in advance of its common contemporaries, but in advance of all preceding times. We understand natural beauty, and natural affections, and above all moral beauty, in a new way, all our own. Now to what is the advance due? It is all due to culture in its highest connection—its connection with religion. We feel stronger emotions about natural scenery, for just the same reason that we feel stronger emotions about righteousness. And the reason is, that our emotions, in either case, no longer tempt us to

draw grotesque inferences from themselves. There's the whole heart of the matter. We rest gratefully content with the objects that excite our love; we don't pass away beyond them, and forget them. You had an excellent instance of the old treatment I condemn in those verses of Euripides which Mr. Laurence has translated with so much tenderness. There, you see, you have nature—flowers, meadows, and so forth; and more important still, you have a high conception of virtue. But yet in that poem you have no real feeling for either the flowers or the virtue. The feeling only grazes these, so to speak, and glances off to a shadowy deity beyond, who was no more true, no more *verifiable*, than any of the rest of her kind, male or female, singular or plural. And now,' Mr. Luke went on, turning to Miss Merton, 'here is another illustration of the whole thing—of the advance made by culture in our entire mental state, of which I particularly wanted

to talk to you (for in one point at least we agree, even professedly—the doctrine of development), and this is an illustration of it that you in a special way will appreciate. *You* of course,’ said Mr. Luke, ‘know something more or less about St. Augustine, I suppose.’

As it was with her reading that Father’s account of *his* conversion that Miss Merton in a peculiar way associated her own, she looked at Mr. Luke with increased interest, feeling at the same time that she had certainly as much knowledge on the subject as he so generously gave her credit for.

‘Well,’ Mr. Luke went on, ‘Augustine was on the whole, you know, the most cultured of all the Fathers, and considering the early date at which he lived, had in some ways a real insight into Christianity ; so we may safely consider him as the most favourable specimen of the results of the old system. Let us take then the purest and most elevating of all the pleasures of life, and enquire

through him, how it is treated and looked upon by theological Christianity. The eyes, says Augustine, love fair and various forms, and shining and lovely colours ; and all day long they are before me, and solicit my contemplation. " For " (and this exquisite sentence I remember in his very words) " the Light, that queen of colours, bathing all that we can look upon, from morning till evening, let me go where I will, will still keep gliding by me in unnumbered guises, and soothes me whilst I am busy at other things, and am thinking nothing of her." '1

Miss Merton was pleased at the appreciative tone in which Mr. Luke quoted. Mr. Luke noticed this, and he was pleased also.

' And now,' he continued, ' what return does our gentleman make to the light for its beautiful and constant service to him ? Does he thank it ? does he praise it ? does he seek it ? No—' Mr. Luke here gave a

¹ Vide *Aug. Conf.* l. ix. c. 34.

little laugh—‘not a bit of it! He prays to his God that he may be delivered from its insidious snares; he envies the blindness of Tobit, and describes himself as “earnestly groaning” under the temptations of these eyes of his flesh. That is all! There,’ said Mr. Luke, with a confident appeal to Miss Merton, whose expression was now slightly altering, ‘we have in a most pointed form the barbarising results of the old theological religion. And now, put side by side with this, the following expression of the religion of sweet reason, such as culture reveals it to us. It deals with exactly the same sense, and the same pleasures:—

What soul was his, when, from the naked top
Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun
Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He looked—
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
And ocean’s liquid mass beneath him lay
In gladness and deep joy. The clouds were touched,
And in their silent faces could be read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank

The spectacle : sensation, soul, and form,
All melted into him ; they swallowed up
His animal being ; in them did he live,
And by them did he live ; they were his life.
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not ; in enjoyment it expired
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request.¹

A sudden sigh here escaped from some one. Mr. Luke looked round.

‘Ah,’ exclaimed Mr. Stockton, ‘what a description of prayer ! What a noble, what a magnificent description !’

The fashion of Mr. Luke’s countenance changed. He stopped short, he would not proceed a word farther. His whole quotation had been ruined, he felt, by this odious interruption.

‘I never supposed,’ said Miss Merton, who thought Mr. Luke pausing that she might give in her acquiescence, ‘I never supposed St. Augustine’s views quite final upon

¹ Vide Wordsworth, *Excursion*, Book i.

all matters. I dare say there are some things that even I could have taught him.'

She smiled as she said this ; but there was a little embarrassment in her tone which was perceived by Laurence, and which brought him at once to her rescue.

'I,' he said, 'think the contrast Mr. Luke has drawn even stronger than he has made it. I by no means think that Augustine was afraid of the pleasures of light and sight as they were enjoyed by Wordsworth ; for I can hardly fancy that he could have had the least conception of them. They seem to me a new and peculiar heritage, which *we* may all more or less have part in ; but which by former ages were undreamt of, not rejected. I often myself look back on a certain early walk I took one spring morning in these gardens—amongst the very trees and flower-beds we are now looking out upon. The fresh softness that was in the air, and all the wandering scents, like dreams or prophecies of

summers gone or coming, and the wet light glistening on the dewy leaves, seemed to go at once to the soul—to “melt into me,” as into Wordsworth’s herdsman. Once I surprised myself stooping under a dripping bough, to look upwards at a yellow flower, and watch it lonely against a background of blue sky ; and once I started to find myself quite lost in staring at a red rock, gleaming amongst shrubs and ivy, which a plant of periwinkle spangled with a constellation of purple stars. The colour, the shape, the smell of every leaf and flower—each seemed to touch me like a note of music ; and the bloom of morning mist was over everything.’

‘Ah,’ said Mrs. Sinclair, her dark eyes gleaming in the moonlight, ‘how those spring mornings sometimes make one sick with longing!’

‘Yes,’ said Laurence, ‘with longing—with a vague longing ; not always, I am afraid, with thanksgiving or with praise. But

I think the feeling in all its moods is the same in some ways. It is a mixing together of outward and inward things—our whole inward lives passing out of us into Nature ; Nature melting into us, and growing part of our inward lives, so that all our hopes and fears and memories become embodied things, touching us in scents of flowers, in the breath of the air, in the sparkle of water, or mixing, like Hamadryads, their beings with the trees. Now, could I have described such feelings as these—my own state of mind during my morning walk—to Saint Augustine, he would not have understood me. He would have thought me raving. And my case is not peculiar. These feelings are no private things of my own. They belong to our whole age. And of this,' Laurence went on, 'you may see a very curious proof in a part of our modern literature, which as literature is least successful. I mean a certain class of novels : not the works of the greater novelists, still

less the works of the professional novel-manufacturers ; not these, but a sort of production almost peculiar to our own time—the novels of amateurs, who write perhaps but a single book during their whole lives ; and that one, with the simple aim of pouring out their own feelings for themselves to contemplate, or of explaining to themselves or others their own histories.’

‘And so,’ said Mr. Storks, ‘you would gauge the refinement of the age by its silliest novels ?’

‘I think we too often forget,’ said Laurence, ‘that a very silly book may be evidently the work of a very clever person ; and may show its author possessed of every gift, except that of literature. And in many of the poor novels I am speaking of, the utter failure of the expression often only calls our attention more strongly to the depth, the delicacy, and the refinement of what the writer has struggled to express. I was read-

ing a girl's novel in the train the other day, called *Love in a Life*. Its long spasms of ungrammatical verbiage, its utter want of knowledge of the world, would have turned the dullest reviewer, in spite of himself, into a caustic wit. But there was something all through it, that its authoress was trying—trying to utter, that reminded me of Ariel trying to escape from his tree. What, Lady Ambrose! Have *you* written a novel? No? Then why are you looking so mysterious, and so full of meaning?’

‘Go on, Mr. Laurence,’ said Lady Ambrose. ‘I’ll show you by and bye.’

‘Well,’ said Laurence, ‘take any one of these novels, and you will find the writer looking on Nature in just that peculiar modern way that we have been talking of. I don’t say you will always find the sentiment in the books, but the books will show you that you would find it in the writers. And this feeling about Nature is but an

example of others. Take, as I said, the modern conception of love, and study that too, in these foolish novels. You will find half the folly comes from an attempt to express much, not from success in expressing little.'

A pause followed this. It was broken at last by Allen.

'I quite agree with Mr. Laurence,' he said, diffidently. 'I have not much right to judge, I daresay. I am not a great reader; and I can only speak from books. But still I know a little of the love poetry of this and of other times; and the poetry of this has always seemed to me far—far the highest. It has seemed to me to give the passion so much more meaning, and such a much greater influence over all life. And this, I suppose, must be because men, as the world goes on, are really learning to love in a higher way than perhaps they themselves are often conscious of.'

‘I think some philosopher,’ murmured Mrs. Sinclair to Leslie, ‘says we feel that we are greater than we know. It must be a great comfort sometimes to know that we are greater than we feel.’

‘Is it not Novalis,’ went on Allen, ‘who says that if all the human race were a single pair of lovers, the difference between mysticism and non-mysticism would cease? Would that have been understood even a hundred years ago? But as to poets, I was thinking of two English poets of our own day especially. Shakespeare may of course have exhibited the working of love more powerfully than they; yet I am sure he could never have conceived its meaning and its nature so deeply. No heroine of his could have understood Mrs. Browning’s *Sonnets from the Portuguese*; nor any hero of his her husband’s love lyrics. What seems to me the thing so peculiarly modern, is this

notion of love as something which, once truly attained, would, as Browning says,

make Time break,
Letting us pent-up creatures through
Into Eternity, our due.'¹

'Ah!' murmured Mrs. Sinclair, 'but suppose there is no eternity! I think we had better take what we can, and be thankful. Listen—listen again! "The nightingales, the nightingales!" There, Lord Allen, there is a bit of your Mrs. Browning for you.'

'What, Lord Allen!' said Lady Ambrose, 'and is Mr. Robert Browning a better poet than Shakespeare? I always thought Shakespeare was *quite* our best.'

'It is not a question,' said Laurence, as Allen did not speak, 'of different poets, but of different ages. I have often wondered myself how far *Faust* would have appealed to the author of *Hamlet*, and whether all the

¹ Vide Mr. R. Browning's *Dis aliter visum*

spiritual action of the drama, in so far as it relates to the heroine, might not be lost upon him. What a difference between Margaret and Ophelia—not between themselves, but between the parts they play! Shakespeare himself *might* have understood Margaret's influence. I doubt it. But even if he had, that would prove little. Shakespeare's was

The prophetic soul
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come ;¹

and the "wide world" of his time would itself have understood nothing of it. But what strikes me still more than the growth of particular feelings, is the infusion and the interpenetration of all. Look at Shakespeare's Sonnets. He loved the objects they were addressed to ; he loved flowers and Nature. But these two sets of things were *connected* only in his mind, they were not *fused*. Take, however, that most typical of all modern

¹ Vide Shakespeare, *Sonnet* cvii.

poems—the celebrated love-song in *Maud*, and think of that :—

The slender acacia would not shake
One long milk-bloom on the tree ;
The white lake-blossom fell into the lake,
And the pimpernel dozed on the lea ;
But the rose was awake all night for your sake,
Knowing your promise to me ;
The lilies and roses were all awake,
They sighed for the dawn and thee.

What a passion is here ! We almost hear the lovers' pulses as they painfully beat quicker. Our breath catches with his ; and we long and long with his longing. And yet hardly a word about his feelings is said directly. The secret is echoed back to us from the scene and from the summer night. It is the milk-bloom of the acacia, the musk of the roses, the stir of the morning breeze, that tells it all to us as if they were living things, and as if a human passion had passed into them for a soul. Now, would the world have understood this in any other times but

ours? I don't think even Shakespeare's Jessica would, nor Dante's Beatrice, nor Petrarch's Laura, nor Horace's Lydia, nor Plato's Diotima, nor Homer's Helen.'

'Listen!' exclaimed Mr. Rose, eagerly, as soon as Laurence stopped; 'will you let me read one passage out of my work which bears upon this very point—in fact, sums up exactly what you have been saying? It occurs,' said Mr. Rose, who was sitting ready under one of the lamps with some printer's proofs before him, 'in my *Essay on Capacity*. "*But chief*"—this is the passage I mean—"*But chief amongst the new things which the heart of man has come to the understanding of, is the passion of love, in its distinctly modern form. The goddess of this love is no longer the Aphrodite of the Greeks, or the Mary of the Christians. She is a mysterious hybrid being, in whose veins is the blood of both of them. She is Mary in her desire of the Creator; she is Aphrodite in her desire of the*

creature; and in her desire of the creation, she is also *Artemis*." ' (' Oh, this will never do—this will never do !' muttered Dr. Jenkinson to himself, tapping with his feet on the ground.) " *Into the strange passion,*" Mr. Rose went on, " *of which hers is the tutelage, there have melted the sounds of woods and of waters, and the shapes and the hues of mountains, and the savour of airs and winds, and the odours of all flowers. All the joys, indeed, of the senses have fallen into it, like streams into one sea. And with the joys of the spirit it has been likewise. But whereas the senses have contributed their joys mainly, the spirit has contributed its sorrows and pains as well. Throughout this love, despite its fulness of life, there yet runs also a constant taint of death, of which it needs cleansing—grotesque troubles and misgivings of conscience, and cloistral meditations, and fantastic repentances. For this very reason, however, is it the more wholly expressive to us of the man's inner development.*

It shows us how all his desires, senses, and powers of feeling have been growing together, and coalescing into a single organism, capable of quite new sets of pleasures, and responding to far finer movements from without."

'H'm,' said Mr. Luke, slowly, in a tone of meditative commendation, 'there's a great deal of truth in that—a very great deal—if the fellow,' he added to himself, 'would only put it a little better.'

'Are you *quite* sure,' said Dr. Jenkinson, looking round him in an agony of suppressed irritation, 'that anyone at all feels all these things, beyond the very few people who talk about them?'

'Yes,' said Mr. Rose, smiling with a honeyed gravity, and wholly unconscious of the Doctor's animus, 'all feel thus who have any part or lot in the world's development.'

'You,' said the Doctor, turning sharply away from Mr. Rose, 'think so, Laurence,

don't you, because you find some of the same sort of phrases in novels ? I don't think you'll find very much thought in those novels—not very much. They are effeminate foolish books.'

'Yes,' said Allen with an assenting voice that much pleased the Doctor, 'a great deal of this increased depth and refinement of feeling, I know, is very good—all of it, I daresay, may be. But still, if left to itself, it must tend—indeed, I have often seen it tend, to make men effeminate, as Dr. Jenkinson says, and unfit for work. Now, I daresay Mr. Luke will call me a barbarian, but I am going to venture to say that, in spite of all that is said against it, that barbarous thing, sport—shooting, deer-stalking, hunting—is of great value, especially to people who are not barbarians, as a kind of mental tonic. It makes them active and spirited—it must do so : it gives them presence of mind, and a readiness to exert themselves ; and though

sport may in one sense be a self-indulgence, it is a self-indulgence that is constantly teaching all sorts of self-denial.'

'My dear Lord Allen,' said Mr. Luke, 'I most entirely agree with you. It does seem, I admit at first sight a somewhat singular thing, that the result of the latest civilisation should be to give men leisure to return to the occupations of their earliest barbarism—and those too deprived of their one justification—necessity. But still these barbarous sports must, as you say, if not pursued too exclusively, give a valuable moral tone to minds whose refinement might else become weakness. Only the worst of the matter, as it actually stands, is this—that the majority of people who do follow sport, are the very people who have no refinement that needs strengthening, but merely an idle aimless strength that needs refining. And you must remember, Lord Allen, that the man who is gluttonous of aimless bodily action is

no better than the man who is an epicure in aimless mental emotion.'

'And so,' said Donald Gordon, with devout solemnity, 'this is what we must remedy in our New Republic. Our gentlemen there must have both sides of their nature developed equally; and they must be at once so intellectual and so manly, as to be content that partridges and foxes shall die exclusively for them, without their living exclusively for partridges and foxes.'

'Exactly so,' said Mr. Luke drily.

'Some one observed this afternoon,' said Allen, turning a little stiffly to Donald Gordon, 'how one could see the expression of a girl's face changed by the influence of a little genuine mental culture. I have noticed the same thing in men's faces, under the influence of a little genuine bodily culture. And I think myself that the moors of your country, or a river in Norway, or a good cruise in a yacht, may go—well, at least half

as far, towards making a complete man, as the study of books, and art, and poetry, in an arm-chair, or in a picture-gallery.'

'I think that is so true,' said Miss Merton softly to him in a whisper, for Dr. Jenkinson had begun to speak.

'But,' the Doctor was saying, 'you must want something besides looking at pretty scenery, and falling in love, and shooting. I think you want something besides that to make life complete. You will want to exercise your intellect—your reason.'

'Yes,' said Allen, 'and I defend all this voluntary physical exercise and excitement, because I think it makes the mind even more healthy than it does the body.'

'Yes,' said Dr. Jenkinson with a smile, 'I think that's right.'

'You, gentlemen,' interposed Lady Grace, 'seem to be taking very good care of yourselves; but are we women to shoot and take all this exercise also?'

‘That,’ said Mr. Luke with a courtly smile, ‘we defer to your superior wisdom. There are, however, two helps to education, akin to exercise, in which both sexes will share, and which in a perfect state of society would be most important in their results. I mean travelling, and the halving of our lives between town and country. The completeness, the many-sidedness of such culture as there is amongst us, is in a great measure due to these; but it is only slowly that we are learning to use them properly. Of course, Jenkinson, you understand all this—no man can do so better. It is simply the music and gymnastic of the Greeks. It is simply true education, which is but another name for culture. And in the cultivated man thought, and taste, and feeling, and spirit are really all one, and fused together. Could we but look forward to a time when all or even the greater part of those one meets would unite these priceless gifts, there might then indeed

be some satisfaction and some hope in life.'

'And don't you want goodness?' said Dr. Jenkinson, all his sharpness returning; 'do you want no sense of duty, and right, and wrong?'

'Yes,' said Laurence, 'but we have included that already. We have found that that is pre-supposed in every educated pleasure. It is that that gives even our lightest conversation its best sparkle, and beads its surface over with its bright, crisp foam of half-conscious irony. The moral ideal is a note, as it were, which we are always hearing, and with which our daily talk makes continual harmonies, because it is never pitched in unison with it. Thus we talk of killing time, and so on, as being the great end of our lives; of money or position being the only thing to marry for; and of marriage ties as if they were always a weariness, or a grotesque torture.'

‘And thus,’ said Leslie, ‘we say a man has had, *par excellence*, a success, when he has, for his own selfish pleasure, done a woman the greatest injury possible.’

‘And thus,’ said Donald Gordon softly, ‘when he does not tell all the world he has done so, we say he is a perfect gentleman.’

‘And do you want no religion?’ said Dr. Jenkinson, paying no attention to all this, but again turning to Mr. Luke.

‘My dear Jenkinson,’ said Mr. Luke, ‘you and I agree upon these matters so well, that I think you must be trying to misunderstand us. Can religion and morals be separated? and are not they both included in what we mean by culture? Is it not in virtue of culture—of that nice and complex discrimination, that we can tell at once when we come across a genuine *logion* of Jesus amongst the sayings vulgarly supposed to be most distinctive of Him? Think, for in-

stance,' Mr. Luke continued, 'what a beautiful and profound harmony is at once made amongst our heartstrings, if culture have really tuned them, by such a story as that of the woman taken in adultery, or by the parable of the Prodigal Son, or by such simple pregnant sayings as, "*ὑπάγω καὶ ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς*," and then turn for a moment to the theological accounts of the Trinity! Why,' exclaimed Mr. Luke with a sudden jauntiness, 'to sit on the key-board of an organ would make music compared to the discord, the jangling, the string-breaking that Church Catechisms, and Athanasian Creeds, and Episcopal speculations on the personality of the Creator, make on the musical instrument of the cultured mind. Ah,' Mr. Luke continued, 'could the Founder of Christianity only have found men of more culture as His immediate disciples and reporters—could He only have secured a biographer as simply honest as poor Boswell was——Well, well, but

it's no use speculating about what might have been. Religion has had bad times hitherto, but now at last we—some of us, at least—are seeing the way to make them better; you yourself, Jenkinson, amongst the number. And all this is due to that very thing which we say is the essence of the best human life—culture; culture which is neither religion, nor morality, nor taste, nor intellect, nor knowledge, nor wide reading, but the single result of all—and this,' Mr. Luke added, 'showing itself to the full—doing itself complete justice, through—as our friends have already said—what we call polish and high-breeding, and refinement of manner, and of manners.'

'Surely you,' said Mr. Stockton, turning to Dr. Jenkinson with the most mollifying deference, 'must agree with us that the present century has seen the soul of man widening out, with all its marvellous powers, and displaying new riches of beauty like an unfolding flower. But whilst we value—and none can

value more than I, our higher flights of imagination, our finer forms of love, and poetry, and worship, I am not blind to the great agent that is at the bottom of all this change. I mean the emancipated human intellect, with all its manifold apparatus of discovery and conquest—that great liberator of life, and thought, and religion.’

‘There is some truth in that,’ said Dr. Jenkinson, not ungraciously, ‘but I think you are all putting it in a wrong way. And Luke,’ he added with a little more causticity, ‘to understand Christianity you must know something of other religions too. You must study the great religions of the East, and compare them with those of the West. No religion can be understood by its own light only.’

‘In our ideal city,’ said Mr. Rose, ‘as I saw it in my brief Apocalypse, you will find a home and a temple for every creed, and for every form of worship.’

‘What!’ exclaimed Lady Ambrose, ‘does Dr. Jenkinson want us to introduce Juggernaut and his car into England?’

‘May I ask you one question,’ broke in Mr. Herbert suddenly, ‘a question which at times, I confess, seems to me not without importance! Will this religion of yours, as you told us in the afternoon it was based on the discrimination between good and evil, also involve a discrimination between life and death? Will it, I mean, point to any other life beyond this, or will it not? Is whatever evil and sorrow we patiently suffer, a thing which, if it do not bring its reward to us here, will never bring us any reward at all? And shall we call the death of the noble sufferer blessed for no other reason than that he rests from his labours and his works do not follow him?’

‘Dear me! dear me!’ said Dr. Jenkinson petulantly to himself. ‘These sort of questions ought never to be asked in that

hard abrupt way. You can't answer them—you can't answer them.'

Mr. Stockton, however, found no difficulty with *his* answer.

'As to that,' he said, 'each man would think as he pleased, and his thoughts would shape themselves to meet the deepest needs of his life. In the state of society we long for, the belief in a future life would be open to all to accept or to reject. The only thing to guard against would be any definite public opinion on the matter, one way or the other ; for in any definite public opinion, remember, there is the germ of all dogmatism and of all persecution. Public opinion, in society as it ought to be, would be a frictionless fluid, if I may borrow a metaphor from science, in which no adventitious obstacle from prejudice or otherwise would impede the progress of any view that its own merits set in motion.'

Mr. Luke was certainly an unfortunate man. Mr. Stockton had again, in part at

least, expressed the exact thing which in other words he was going to have said himself. Mr. Luke, however did not flinch. He boldly took the bull by the horns.

‘True,’ he said; ‘that metaphor is ingenious, and explains exactly what we want to explain. That *is* one of the great conditions of a truly cultivated society, what Mr. Stockton calls a frictionless public opinion — a public opinion which shall let every system, every creed, every philosophy of life, stand or fall on its own practical verifiable merits; and this we shall get, too, if we can only banish two things, prejudice and ignorance, of which last,’ Mr. Luke added, looking studiously away from Mr. Stockton, ‘by far the deadliest form is the fetish-worship of useless knowledge.’

‘Well,’ said Miss Merton, ‘I suppose that this is all that any of us would ask, who really and truly believe in what we profess to believe.’

‘Of course it is,’ said Mr. Luke, ‘everything—everything.’

‘And I’m *quite* sure,’ said Lady Grace, ‘that in a society where the tone is so nobly liberal, and where all have such a true and burning admiration of the morally beautiful, that it will be quite impossible that woman’s life shall not be seen to be what it really is—a thing as capable as men’s of high aims, and independent purposes, and not, as it were, entirely sunk in theirs. I, Mr. Luke, in face of such a public opinion as you speak of, should have little fear for our cause. I think, under God, it would prosper there.’

‘Of course it would,’ said Mr. Luke. ‘If culture enables us to detect beauty and to prize it, what should it enable us to prize more than womanhood, with all its exquisite capabilities developed to their utmost? Life has no greater ornament than cultured womanhood.’

‘Except cultured manhood,’ said Lady

Grace, unconsciously giving Mr. Luke a slight wound by her generous and unexpected return of his royal compliment. ‘Ah,’ she sighed to herself with a look at Mr. Luke, ‘and he does not believe in God—or thinks he does not! I suppose it must needs be that offences come; but I wish they did not come by such good men. However—I trust that it is all really for the best. And then—there is no such thing as eternal punishment. One may be thankful to feel sure of that.’

‘I am afraid you will think me very troublesome,’ said Mr. Herbert, who had been talking to Laurence in a low tone for the last few minutes, ‘but there is one question more I should like to ask you. I want to know if you, who see the many delicate beauties of life, and the countless positions it may be viewed from,—I want to know if you will teach the lower, the commoner classes, who look up to you as models, to quote

poetry, and to be enquiring and sceptical also ?’

‘I hope not, indeed,’ broke in Lady Ambrose with vigour ; ‘and as to our being their models, Mr. Herbert, I’m sure you can’t mean that. It seems to me one of the very worst things in these times that they will take us for their models. However, I think it is really a good deal our fault, and that it comes very much from our giving our maids so many of our old clothes to wear. That sort of thing puts notions into their heads. Now here at any rate is *one* reform, that is implied in our Republic ;—I don’t like that word *Republic*, by the way—we must put a stop to all this imitation of ourselves. Isn’t that so, Mr. Laurence ?’

‘Thank you, Lady Ambrose,’ said Mr. Herbert rising, ‘thank you. I think it altogether a wise—nay more than wise, an essential thing, to keep these wide speculations from spreading beyond the only circles that

they are really fitted for. I have to go indoors now, as I have a few matters to arrange to-night ; but I am much obliged to you all for what you have taught me about culture, and enlightenment, and society, as it ought to be.'

'The difficulty is,' said Lady Ambrose, as Mr. Herbert was walking away, 'how to keep all this thought and so forth, to ourselves. One thing I'm quite certain of, that we really do a great deal of harm without thinking of it, by the way in which we speak our minds out before servants, and that sort of people, without in the least considering what may come of it. Now what do you think of this, as a plan for making our ideal state a really good and contented place? The upper classes should speak a different language from the lower classes. Of course we should be able to speak theirs, but they would not be able to speak ours. And then, you see, they would never hear us talk, or read our books, or get hold of our

ideas ; which, after all, is what does all the mischief. And yet,' said Lady Ambrose with a sigh, 'that's not the great difficulty. The great difficulty would be about daughters and younger sons, and how to give them all enough to keep them going in the world. However, this we can talk of in a minute. But—' here Lady Ambrose put her hand in her pocket, and a sound was heard as of rustling paper.

'I really do believe,' said Laurence, 'that Lady Ambrose *has* written a novel, although she denies it ; and there she is going to read a bit of it now, as a specimen of her own culture.'

'No,' said Lady Ambrose, 'really and truly. And if I had written a novel, Mr. Laurence, I should not have the cruelty to inflict it upon you. No ; but what I have here,' she said at last producing a manuscript, 'though it is not mine, is next door to a novel, and in some respects better than one.'

It is a sort of memoir of herself, written by a certain lady I know. I am betraying no confidence in showing it to you ; as she herself has lent it to a good many friends, and as long as her name is not mentioned, she is by way of wishing to have it circulated. She has, in fact, consulted me about having it printed. Now I want you, Mr. Laurence, to look through some of it, and tell me if the writer is not really a person of culture. Perhaps you would not mind reading out a little of it.'

'Am I to read it all through?' asked Laurence, as he took the seat which Mr. Rose gave up to him at the table.

'No, no,' said Lady Ambrose. 'Just pick out the best bits—a page here, and a page there.'

'Well,' said Laurence, 'I will, at any rate, start with the beginning. Now are all of us ready to be let into the secrets of a young lady's soul?—

“ One often feels a longing—who has not felt it?—in the hurry and trouble of life to pause for a little while and look back upon the past, which we too, too often forget, and see what it is we have grown from. We long to see how it has fared with ourselves—our own selves—our characters.’

‘ I think you may skip the beginning,’ said Lady Ambrose, ‘ it’s a little dull. Turn over a page or two.’

“ *How strangely do they come back to me, those distant irrevocable days!*” Will that do?’ asked Laurence.

‘ Yes,’ said Lady Ambrose, ‘ I think so—go on there.’

“ ——*those distant irrevocable days, when the world was all new to me, and each experience was fresh and delightful, and I knew nothing of what self-reproach could mean. Ah, me! how times have changed since then! I sometimes fancy that I am hardly worthy now to look back upon my own past. I was*

gifted naturally with a curious warmth and sincerity of nature, that must have been very beautiful. But my peculiar gift, my own own gift, was a power of sympathy with others, by which quite naturally I used to throw myself into their places, understand their difficulties, and excite myself with their interests. When I was yet quite a child, that, I know, is what men felt in me—I never cared for boys—one man especially. It was then that life began for me, and what it all meant broke on me like a revelation. I, in my simplicity, never dreamt of his being more than a friend—I am not sure even that he was my dearest friend. I certainly never tried to charm him. But I did charm him, nevertheless, quite unconsciously. And he loved me passionately, devotedly, child as I was. Ah, God! when will another ever feel the same for me? And I—‘O, my lost, my rejected friend! come back to me,’ sometimes I still cry in my solitude; ‘poor, and obscurely connected as you are,

come back to me !' I shall never forget—poor little me !—the solemn shock of the moment, how my heart stood still, how all the blood came rushing into my cheek, when all of a sudden, as it seemed to me, and without any warning, he asked me to be his wife. Everything seemed to grow dizzy before me. It seemed to me as if the day of judgment had come. (Alas ! will there ever be a day of judgment at all ? is what I now ask.) I don't know what I said. I only remember distinctly my throwing myself into my mother's arms, and crying like a child—and I was one—as if my very heart would break. 'I am only a child !' that is what I said. 'Oh, mother, I am such a child !' The pathos of the scene often comes back to me even now—a shadowy timid memory, wondering if I shall give it harbour. I remember, too, how I said my prayers that night, and how I asked God——"'

‘I think you needn’t read that,’ said Lady Ambrose, ‘go on a page or two further.’

“*I spent much of my time sketching.*” Shall I go on there?’ said Laurence. “*I had always a curiously appreciative eye for natural beauty.*” Will that do? Or shall I go on here—I think this is better—at the next paragraph?—“*Oh the great waste of love in this our world.*”’

‘Yes, go on there,’ said Mrs. Sinclair and several others.

“*Oh the great waste of love in this our world! How many a true heart would have given itself to me, could I only honestly and unreservedly have opened out to it all the depths of mine, and received it! And why did I never do so? It may be that I have known none who could really understand me—none that I could really love. But does that excuse me, not for not loving them, but for making as though I did love them, and so ruining their lives and searing my own?*”

sending them in the end to their brandy-bottles, and their gaming-hells, and their wild Cremornes, and myself—to the mental state in which I am now !

“ Have I then lost it for ever—lost all hope of love ? and must I quietly take up with my unappreciated loneliness ? If it is so, if, indeed, it is so, surely I have brought it on myself. Was there not one—not my earliest lover—but another, who with a devotion I understood far more fully, laid himself at my feet, and offered me all his man’s devotion, and his man’s sympathy ! Why, why in my madness did I send him from me, penniless as he was—but what of that ?—driving him to death, and leaving myself to desolation ? How does the image of his pale still face upturned towards the Indian star-light, with eyes which no star-light could ever touch any more, rise before me—his hand on his breast, and clasping with its last grasp a locket with my picture in it ! Yes, I see him there, though I did not see him. I know

how he must have looked, with his heart bullet-pierced—noble, beautiful in death. Unworthy as I was of you, my true-hearted one, too late, too late, did I learn my own unworthiness. I was sitting in the window of our house at Ventnor, when the letter came that told me. It was evening; and I had been looking out through the summer twilight at the sea and at the sunset. As I read the letter, it dropped from my hand. I gave a gasp. I repressed a shrill cry. I felt a choking sensation in my throat; but I was very proud, and I even repressed a sob. I only, with entire calmness, turned my head towards the sea, and sighed a sigh deep-drawn as if my soul were in it. My cheek was pale, my eyes were wild and wistful—full of a solemn new earnestness. What the exact thoughts were that were busy in me, I cannot tell. All I am conscious of was this, that far, far off were the great crimson spaces of evening sky and a trail of rippled splendour on the sea. One great violet

cloud fringed with a border of living fire, that seemed to be eating into it, hung just above the place where the sun had gone down ; and over this, in a pale liquid solitude of hushed colour, was the evening star, trembling like a tear-drop. I was always sensitive to colour ; and somehow or other this sunset relieved me—went right to my heart with a quiet sense of healing. That evening was, I think, one of the great points in my life. I seemed ever after to see my own character more clearly—how deep were my own capacities for feeling, and also how strangely Nature could enter in and comfort me, when all human sympathy would have seemed intrusive. That night, when I went upstairs, I hardly knew myself. There was a wild look in my eyes—an inexpressible mournfulness and an inexpressible longing. Two or three long tendrils of hair had got loose, and hung over my forehead with a kind of wild languor. ‘What is there that men can see in me to attract them?’ I had

often said to myself. I think then a something of what it was began to dawn upon me. 'And he—he, the true, the gallant, the devoted, he has lost all this,' I gasped, turning away from the glass; and, throwing myself on my knees by the bed, the sob I had so long suppressed broke forth, and I tried to pray——" h'm—and so on, and so on, and so on——'

'You needn't read all those bits about the prayers,' said Lady Ambrose. 'I don't think it is quite reverent.'

'Well,' said Laurence, 'here's a new stage of her life. Let us go on here. "*And now, from the bleak desolation of my present existence, I peer wistfully out on all sides, and see if any will bring the love to me that I so much crave for.*"'

'Poor thing!' said Mrs. Sinclair, with a little sigh.

'I'm afraid,' said Lady Ambrose, 'I must mention, by the way, that the lady is married and remarkably well married too.'

“Here in the old house with its quiet gables,” Laurence went on reading, *“I sit in my own room, and watch the sunset dying away over the yellowing autumn woods, itself the colour of a belated autumn leaf. I watch it alone—yes, thank heaven, alone. I manage to steal for an hour or two away from those people of whom the house is full. Who is there amongst them that can understand me? whose spirit meets mine on equal terms? I laugh with them, I talk with them, I jest with them, and they think they know me. But ah! the weariness, the far-offness of it all——”*

‘It is entirely her own fault,’ said Lady Ambrose, ‘that she has these people here. Her husband is devoted to the country and the turnips for their own sake, and would never see a soul but a few of the neighbouring squires and parsons, if she did not make him. In London, you know, she is nearly always by herself. At least,’ Lady Ambrose added: ‘he’s very rarely with her.’

‘A little further on,’ said Laurence, ‘it seems that all the visitors have gone ; and she has been to pay a visit to the parson’s wife.’

‘You may be sure she was quite by herself if she did that,’ said Lady Ambrose.

‘Here,’ Laurence continued, ‘is a description of the visit. “ *What sweet eyes the little thing had ! What a look of trustfulness in her face ! A good and pure, and therefore a happy woman, if ever there was one. What a trust in those eyes of hers ! What an innocence ! What a sweet content ! There is no purple shadow of care under her eyes—(people say I darken mine artificially. Alas ! heaven knows there is little need for me to do that !)* There is no secret trouble discernible in her lips—no languor in her air ! What does she know of life, with its troubles, its distractions, its sins ? Ah ! were I but like her—I, world-worn and world-weary, sickened with pomps, and vanities, and soiled affections,

and hollow homage—were I but worthy that she should talk to me! ‘Don’t talk to me,’ I felt inclined to say. ‘You wouldn’t if you knew—if you could know! Oh, how far better are you than I! You little dream when I show myself demurely in my seat in the village church, bowing at the Glorias, or kneeling with my face hid in my hands, you little imagine what a woman you see there. You little dream what strange thoughts unbidden mix themselves up for me with the hymn-music; what wild regrets, what bitter reveries, what strange scenes and figures, fill my mind as I kneel before the Communion-table. Why could I not have been content like you with a quiet lot, a toiling honest husband like you? Is there not something holy, even in his dull sermons, if you only look on them in the lovely light of duty? Why does my heart vibrate with the troubled wailing music of many sorrows, many longings, of which you do not even dream the existence?

Oh ! what a far higher, far nobler woman are you than I, in every way !

‘And now,’ said Lady Ambrose, seeing that Laurence had shut the book, ‘I want to know if all this is a specimen of culture, and if you would call the writer a cultivated person ; because she is really one of the most delightful people I know to talk to ; and if this is what you call culture—though, I think, in her case, it’s a little bit affected, you know—but then she never lets you see all this when you talk to her—I do quite from the bottom of my heart give up about culture being priggish, and bookish, and all that ; and since, as you say, it really must include religion, I don’t see what we could wish for more, to make life—humanly speaking—perfect. Of course we shall do *good* sometimes—I mean not forget the poor—there’s something so wretchedly heartless in that, I think. And then too, politics——’

‘Yes,’ repeated Allen, ‘politics——’

‘Of course,’ said Lady Ambrose, ‘it is necessary that some of us should look after politics, because if we did not somebody else would. But still—(are you a Liberal, Lord Allen?)—but still, within a limit, I think the *less* we meddle the better.’

‘Much, Lady Ambrose,’ said Mr. Rose, who had been somewhat put out by this digression, ‘much is, no doubt, to be got over in your friend’s style; nor do I think the culture displayed in her memoirs, even apart from that——’

‘Oh, but you mustn’t judge her only by her writings,’ said Lady Ambrose. ‘When you meet her, she is not a bit like them.’

‘Amateurs in writing rarely are,’ said Laurence. ‘Their writings are simply the foot-notes of their lives, where they tell you what they have not skill enough to bring into the text.’

‘She draws beautifully,’ Lady Ambrose went on, ‘and is really the brightest of crea-

tures—so witty, and with such a sense of the ridiculous! And really, to hear her tell a bit of scandal—not that I at all approve of scandal myself—I always think it's so uncharitable——'

'Ah,' said Donald Gordon gently, 'I have the very highest opinion of scandal. It is founded on the most sacred of things—that is, Truth, and it is built up by the most beautiful of things—that is, Imagination.'

'Well, Mr. Gordon,' said Lady Ambrose smiling, 'we won't talk about that now. But as for what you say about style, Mr. Rose, it is rather jerky, and so forth, I admit. However, that's the way with us women. Indeed, I often think that if women had invented language, it would have consisted mainly of interjections, and that its only stop would have been a note of exclamation.'

Mr. Rose was much annoyed at these interruptions.

'I wanted to say,' he went on, as soon as

Lady Ambrose had ceased, 'that I think your friend's memoirs more instructive from their very shortcomings, as showing how the human mind—even if not exceptionally gifted—has come to be an organism of increased delicacy and capacity, except when stunted by the necessity of work, or of occupation that is other than voluntary, and chosen for any object beyond itself. You have here, you see, that same modern sense of the blending together of the outer and inner worlds; there is the same delicate discrimination between the æsthetic aspects of the different stages of life, and the nice gradation of moral colours: there is the same fine self-consciousness, and consequent endeavour to give tone and quality to her memories as they pass by her, in exquisite and complex ways.'

'Yes,' exclaimed Leslie suddenly, who had spoken but little all the evening, 'here, I think, is the crowning work of culture. It teaches each of us to look back upon his own

life, with all its wants, its relations, and its possibilities, all its wasted hours and its affections trifled away or degraded—it teaches us to look back upon all this with quite a new kind of discrimination. The beauty of youth, with all its buoyancy and innocence, wakes in us of the modern world a more wistful and solemn regret; we are more keenly alive to the pathos of failure; to the sadness of the cold shadows that will often darken the whole inward landscape, and the ravage made by the storms that will sometimes break over it; and to the gleams of sunshine fitfully re-appearing, often only touching its distant wolds. And the charm of this is,' Leslie went on, with a short laugh, 'that however disastrous our lives may have been, whatever shipwreck we may have made of ourselves or others, let us only look back on this with the eyes of culture, whilst "*es wiederholt die Klage des Lebens labyrinthisch irren Lauf*," and the whole retrospect becomes

a delightful picture, the more impressive and suggestive from its landslips, its broken roads, and its waste places. I really think one is repaid for having made oneself quite lonely, and deserted, and friendless, by the pleasure one gets from contemplating one's own situation.'

'I cannot bear that man,' whispered Lady Ambrose to Miss Merton. 'Didn't you notice the nasty way in which all that was said? But—good gracious, Mr. Laurence, what is that bell ringing for in the house? Is that for us to leave off talking? We have not half done yet.'

Laurence smiled, and looked a little shy, and murmured that he did not think it was so late. 'I don't know whether you'll mind,' he said at last, 'but our Rector is going to give us a little evening service. He proposed it this afternoon in the garden, and I could not well refuse.'

‘Mind it!’ exclaimed Lady Ambrose. ‘I should think not.’

‘Service!’ said Dr. Jenkinson briskly, ‘yes, come and let us go to that. I think,’ he said, looking round him, ‘that you will find the religion we have is the best for us at present. I think so. And Christianity,’ he added, turning to Mr. Stockton, ‘really embraces all religions, even any honest denial of itself.’

There was now a general movement towards the house.

‘I’m afraid,’ said Mrs. Sinclair to Leslie, ‘that you’re not of a very happy disposition. You don’t look happy somehow. And yet I think you might be, if you only tried. I suppose *you’re* not out of spirits like Mr. Laurence, because you don’t believe in the Trinity, are you? Just look at the sea now. Isn’t that beautiful? Don’t you care for that? But I, you know,’ she added with a sigh, ‘disagree with Mr. Luke. *I* want the notion

of a personal deity, to make me enjoy nature. I want my thought to pass away to him. But I don't mean a vague deity ; but some one whom I have myself made a deity, and who, therefore, I can be quite sure exists—do you see ?'

'My dear,' said Lady Ambrose again to Miss Merton, 'I really cannot bear Mr. Leslie. I feel quite sure he's a bad man. And the way he sneers and laughs at things does go so against me. I wouldn't have that man inside my house, do you know, for anything. I know you don't think so ; but then you Roman Catholics believe so much, you can afford to be liberal. Not that I myself am at all bigoted ; indeed, the one thing I think we want is toleration and charity. And do you know, my dear,' Lady Ambrose added as they were entering the house, 'I have a set of eight cousins, all unmarried ; and when I look at those girls' faces, I do confess, my dear, that I positively wish your religion was

true ; for then they could all go into convents. One doesn't like those half-and-half Protestant things, you know.'

Just at this moment, emerging from the house, pale and disappointed, appeared the figure of Mr. Saunders.

'It is thrown away,' he exclaimed ; 'my disproof of God's existence. The under-housemaid did it ! I am pleased to discover, however, that she previously read through a part ; so it has not perished, I trust, without emancipating one spirit. What ! are you all going indoors ?'

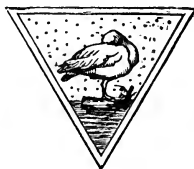
'Yes,' said Mr. Storks, laying his arm on Mr. Saunders's shoulder ; 'and you had better come too. Young man,' he said in a voice of commanding kindness, 'you should never in this virulent way deny God's existence. What rational man believes in it ?'

'I was looking before dinner,' said Mr. Rose, who with Laurence was bringing up the rear, 'at the books in your Uncle's pavilion

in the garden ; and I saw there, in a closed case, a copy of the ' Cultes secrets des Dames Romaines.'

'Well ?' said Laurence a little stiffly. 'It has been locked up for years.'

'I conceived as much,' said Mr. Rose gently. 'As you do not seem to set much store by the work, I will give you thirty pounds for it.'



BOOK V.





CHAPTER I.

ONCE more the theatre was brightly lighted ; and once more the congregation was assembled in the tier of boxes. There was not so much excitement as there had been in the morning ; indeed the reserved decorum that reigned might have been said to partake almost of the nature of apathy. When, however, Dr. Seydon entered, none could deny that he did indeed look a reverend man ; and the very aspect of the place seemed to grow devotional at his presence. Lady Ambrose perceived with a full heart that he was duly habited in a surplice ; and her bosom warmed with a sense of safety

and of comfort as he took his place and solemnly produced his prayer-book. Nor was Lady Ambrose alone in this sudden stir of feeling. There was another of the worshippers who was moved even more strongly, though in a slightly different way. Many starts had been given on the stage in that theatre; but none of these, it may be safely said, ever equalled one now given in the boxes, as Dr. Jenkinson who had been kneeling with his face hid in his hands, raised his eyes, and saw for the first time who it was confronting him—no obscure rural clergyman as he had anticipated; but that illiberal apologist of superstition, whose officious bigotry had robbed the Upper House of its most enlightened spiritual peer. Dr. Jenkinson, however, with the heroism of a true martyr, suffered bravely for his faith in the comprehensiveness of Christianity. His face assumed, in another moment, an expression of cherubic suavity; in his gentlest and

devoutest tones he was soon taking his part in the whole service, and that too with such an exquisite clearness of articulation that amongst the confused murmurs of the rest, the entire evening office sounded like a duet between him and Dr. Seydon. It is true that there was something in the ring of this one audible voice that gave the latter a sense of something being wrong somewhere ; but luckily, being a little shortsighted, he could not recognise the owner of it ; and Dr. Jenkinson, feeling no manner of call to endure the sermon, retired furtively as soon as the prayers were over.

‘Weren’t they read beautifully!’ said Lady Ambrose to Lady Grace in a whisper. ‘Oh how glad I shall be to hear him preach once again!’ she added, as Dr. Seydon having risen from his knees, retired, his hands clasped before him, through the side door. Lady Ambrose, however, was entirely alone in this gladness. Most of the others dreaded

the sermon that was imminent, and some even meditated following Dr. Jenkinson. But events were too quick for them. Hardly, it seemed, had Dr. Seydon left the stalls than the curtain drew rapidly up, and displayed again the Gorge in the Indian Caucasus, only with a preacher in it, very different from the one who had stood there in the morning. The whole congregation gave a sudden gasp of surprise. It was not Dr. Seydon that they saw. It was Mr. Herbert.

With a gracious gravity he advanced towards the footlights ; and made a slight bow to the house—a bow of deprecation and apology.

‘ A little while ago, in the garden,’ he said, ‘ I confessed to our kind host, Mr. Laurence, that there were a few things that I should like quietly to say to you ; and Mr. Laurence has become sponsor for you all, and has promised, in your names, that you would suffer me to say them here. It is true,’ Mr. Herbert went on, with a smile and a wave of his hand,

‘ that when I look round me at this glittering semicircle, I begin to feel not a little shy of you, and to repent of my own temerity. You, however, have given me to-day so much good food for reflection, that I feel bound, in the commonest honesty, to make what poor return I can. So remember, that if I weary you, you have really brought it upon yourselves.

‘ Well—to begin, then. You think me—you need not deny it, for I know you think me—a somewhat crotchety and melancholy individual, averse to modern knowledge and to modern progress, and seeing, as a rule, everything very yellow indeed, with his jaundiced eyes. But I think myself that I am not by any means so obstinate and so wrong-headed as I am quite aware that I appear to you; nay, my own opinion is that I err, rather, in not being quite obstinate enough. It is true that I have persistently pointed out that England is at present given over wholly

to ignoble pursuits, and is ruining herself with deadly industries. But I have never said hitherto, so far as I know, that we might not rally, and that a brighter future might not be in store for us. Nay, I hailed a piece of news to-day with the most unfeigned delight, which seemed an omen to me that such a brighter future actually was in store for us. In a paper that reached me this afternoon there was a letter on the prospects of the English iron trade ; and I read in that letter that nineteen foundries in Middlesborough have been closed within the last three months, and the Moloch fires in their blast-furnaces extinguished ; that ten more foundries in the same place are scarcely able to continue work, and must very shortly be closed likewise ; and that the dense smoke-cloud that so long has darkened that whole country is beginning to clear away, and will open ere long upon astonished human eyes, that have never yet beheld it, the liquid melted blue of the deep wells of

the sky. It is quite true that this indication of a reviving prosperity for our country suggests more than it proves. But at any rate, it put me this afternoon, when I joined your party, into quite a right and hopeful mood for appreciating your conceptions of a better order of things. It is in fact simply to explain my appreciation that I am, in this most unconscionable way, now detaining you.

‘ Let me say in the first place, then, how profoundly right I consider the manner in which you set to work. For it is one of the most vital of all truths, that in a perfect state all the parts will be perfect ; and that if the highest classes be as good as they can be, so also will be all the other classes. And I want to tell you, in the next place, how entirely fair and lovely did all the elements seem to be, out of which you composed for your higher classes their ideal existence. For you gave them every outward grace that could adorn life, and every inward taste and

emotion that could enrich it, and every species of intellectual activity that could stimulate it. Your society was indeed to be truly the *crème de la crème*: it was to be made beautiful, and profound, and brilliant, by lovers and theologians, and wits, and men of science, and poets, and philosophers and humourists—all men and women of the world, and fit to live in society, as well as to educate it. This would indeed be, as was said at dinner, Rome and Athens and Florence, at their best, and let me add Paris also, united and reanimated, and enriched by the possession of yet wider knowledge, and the possibilities of freer speculation. That truly is a dazzling picture. But even that is not all. There was your city itself too, of which a lovely glimpse was given us, with its groves, its gardens, its palaces, and its exquisite reproductions of the world's noblest architectures; and all this under our softest English skies, and by our bluest English

seas. Ah,' exclaimed Mr. Herbert smiling, and clasping his hands gently, 'how I should like to live in a city like that ! I can literally see it now with my mind's eye, whilst I am talking. I see its private houses with their wonders of wrought marble ; I see its theatres, its museums, its chapels and churches of all denominations, its scientific lecture rooms, and its convents. For what strikes me more forcibly than anything is that all forms of faith and philosophy seem to find here an impartial home, and to unite in animating one harmonious social life. In fact so vividly do I see this scene which your words have called up before me, that I want very much, if you will let me, to add one small feature to it, myself. It is a very humble detail, this of mine. In the eyes of the men of science, who lead modern thought, it is simply a sanitary matter. It relates to the way in which you shall dispose of your dead. Now in this, at least,

you will be surprised to hear I quite keep pace with the times, being a sincere advocate for cremation ; and what I should want to do in your city, would be to supply it with an establishment, hidden underground, where the bodies of the dead should be turned into gas, in properly devised retorts ; the gas from each body being received in a small separate gasometer. Above these gasworks, and amongst your fair towers and spires, and your superb institutions, and art-galleries, I would build a circular domed temple of umbred marble, blind and blank upon the face of it, without carved work, and without window ; only there should be written above the portal, not as in Dante's vision,

Per me si va nell' eterno dolore,
Per me si va tra la perduta gente—

but one verse out of our English translation of the Bible, for women and little children to read ; and another verse out of a Latin poet, which is, I believe, an equivalent for the

original of that translation, for men and scholars to read. The first should be, 'Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.' And the other :

Quæris quo jaceas post obitum loco ?
Quo non nata jacent.

And within, around the dark walls, should be a number of separate shrines, like—to use the simile that Dante would have chosen—the stalls in a great stable ; and to each shrine there should be a separate gas-jet. And when the life of any was over, after the fire had done its work upon the dead body, that man or woman who felt most bitterly the loss of the one that had been, should repair to this temple, to an appointed shrine, and there in silence kneeling before it, should light the gas-jet ; and thus evoking for the last time that which was once so loved and loving, pass, with what thoughts might be, a brief vigil before it, till its flicker

grew slowly faint upon the watcher's face, and at length it went out and ended utterly and for ever. And above, over these sanctuaries of bereavement and final leave-taking, there should hang from the domed roof one rude iron lamp, always burning—casting a pale flare upwards upon the darkness. This would be the common lamp of the poor, for whose sake, dying, no one felt bereavement, or whom no one at any rate could find time to say good-bye to; but who thus united together, apart by themselves, would do all that would be at all seemly in them—would remind you mutely and unobtrusively by their joint light, that one thing at least they shared with you, namely death. It is not of the poor, however, that I am mainly thinking now. It is of your higher classes, who have leisure to feel sorrow and all its holy influences. And these, I say, would find in this simple funeral service one that would meet all their

diverse needs, and be in tune with all their diverse feelings. It would suit all. For to some it would symbolise an absolute disbelief in any life beyond; and to all the rest it would symbolise a bewildered doubt about any life beyond. For in one or other of these states of mind everyone would be.

‘Do you deny it?’ exclaimed Mr. Herbert, raising his voice suddenly, and looking round the theatre with a passionate anger, at which the whole audience were literally electrified. ‘Do you deny it?’ he exclaimed. ‘I tell you that it is so. I tell you too that that is your own case, and that in your Utopia you have aggravated the evil, and have not remedied it. You are all deniers or doubters, I tell you, every one of you. The deniers, I know, will not contradict me; so at present I need not speak to them. It is to you—the majority, you who *will* contradict me; you who are so busy with your various affirmations, with your prayers, your

churches, your philosophies, your revivals of old Christianities, or your new improvements on them ; with your love of justice, and humanity, and toleration ; it is to you that I speak. It is to you that I say that however enlightened, and however sure you may be about all other matters, you are darkened and uncertain as to this—whether there really is any God at all who can hear all the prayers you utter to him, or whether there really is any other life at all, where the aspirations you are so proud of will be realised, and where the wrongs you are so pitiful over will be righted. There is not one amongst you who, watching a dead friend, flickering for the last time before you in the form of a gas-flame, and seeing how a little while and this flame was with you, and again a little while and it was not with you, would be at all sure whether this was really because, as your hearts would suggest to you, it went to the

Father, or because, as your men of science would assert to you, it went simply—out.’

‘Listen to me for a moment, and I can prove that this is so, to you. You are rich, and you have leisure to think of things in what light you will, and your life is to a great extent made easy for you by the labour of others. I do not complain of that. There can be no civilisation without order, and there can be no order without subordination. Outward goods must be apportioned unequally, or there would be no outward goods to apportion. But you who have the larger share of these are bound to do something for those who have the less. I say you are *bound* to do so ; or else sooner or later that larger share will be taken away from you. Well, and what is it you propose to do ? I know your answer—I have heard it a thousand times. You will educate them—you will teach them. And truly, if you know how to do that properly, you will have done all

you need do. But,' exclaimed Mr. Herbert, his voice again rising, and quivering with excitement, 'that is just what you do not know. I am not casting my words at random. Out of your own mouths will I judge you. There never was a time when you talked so much as now about teaching the people, and yet do not you yourselves confess that you cannot agree together as to what to teach them? You can agree about teaching them—I know this too well—countless things that you think will throw light upon life ; but life itself you leave a blank darkness upon which no light can be thrown. You say nothing of what is good in it, and of what is evil. Does success in it lie in the enjoyment of bodily pleasures, or in the doing of spiritual duty? Is there anything in it that is right for its own sake, or are all things right only because of their consequences? And seeing that, if we struggle for virtue, our struggles can never be quite successful here, is there any other place

where they may have, I do not say their reward, but their consummation? To these questions only two answers can be given, and one must be entirely true, and the other entirely false. But you—you dare not give either; you are too enlightened. It is true that *you* can afford to be liberal about these matters; you can afford to consider truth and falsehood equally *tolerable*. But for the poor man surely it is not so. It must make some difference to him what you teach him, whether your teaching is to open his eyes to his God and to his duty, and so place his noblest happiness in his own hands, or whether it is to open his eyes to those *verified* Utilitarian principles from which he will learn that his own life and labour are only not utterly contemptible, because they conduce to a material well-being in which he himself can have no share. If, with entire belief yourselves, you are prepared to give him the former teaching, why then it is well and good both for him and you.

But if not, beware of teaching him at all. You will but be removing a cataract from his mind's eye that he may stare aghast and piteous at his own poverty and nakedness, or that he may gaze with a wild beast's hunger at your own truly noble prosperity which he can never taste, save in the wild beast's way.

‘ But enough of the poor ; enough of this division of happiness. Let me ask you to consider now what sort of happiness there is to divide—I say divide, meaning that you will get the whole of it. And as I have said before, this happiness is very fair in seeming. Knowledge, and culture, and freedom, and toleration—you have told us what fine things all these can do for you. And I admit it myself too ; I feel it myself, too. Lovely, indeed, to look upon are the faiths, the philosophies, the enthusiasms of the world—the ancient products of the ages—as the sunshine of the modern intellect falls on them. See they look clearer, and brighter, and more

transparent—see they form themselves into more exquisite and lucid shapes, more aërial structures. But why? Do not deceive yourselves; it is for a terrible reason. It is because, like a fabric of snow, they are one and all dissolving.

‘Listen, and I will show you that this is so. Aristotle says that what is truly a man’s Self is the thinking part of him. This sooner or later all the other parts obey—sooner or later, willingly or unwillingly; and if this Self be base, the whole man will be base; if the Self be noble, the whole man will be noble. And as it is with the individual man, so it is with the ages and the generations. They obey their several Selves, whatever these Selves may be. The world once had a Self, whose chief spokesman was a Jewish peasant, called Jesus; and sooner or later the world followed him. Later on, it had a Self whose chief spokesmen were Dominics or Luthers or Loyolas; and in like manner the world

followed them. Later still, it had got another Self, and the chief spokesmen of this were Voltaires and Rousseaus. And in each case the world was convinced at heart, consciously or unconsciously, that the vital truths of life were to be sought for only where these Selves sought for them. With Jesus and with Luther it sought them in duty and in a turning to the true God ; with Voltaire and Rousseau in justice, and in a turning from the false God. And now, where do you seek them ? Where does the Self of your age seek them—your Self, that thinking part of you before which you all either quail or worship ? Does it seek them either in justice, or loving kindness, or in the vision of the most high God ! No—but in the rotting bodies of dead men, or in the writhing bodies of live cats. And in your perplexity, and your amazed despair, ever and again you cry to it, What shall we do to be saved ? Show us the Father ! Show us the high and holy One that inhabiteth

Eternity ! And what does your Self answer you ? It answers you with a laugh, " There is no high and holy One at all. How say ye then to me show us the Father ? For the Earth saith He is not with me ; and the depth saith He is not with me ; and our filthy phials of decaying animal matter say, He is not with us. Argal, ye poor foolish seekers, He is nowhere." You may try to escape from your own Self, but you cannot ; you may try to forget its answer, but you cannot. Loudly you may affirm with your lips ; but the importunate denial is ever at your heart. *Patriæ quis exsul, se quoque fugit ?*

‘ What do you do then in this perplexity—this halting between, two opinions ? Why you do this. You try to persuade yourselves that neither opinion is of much moment—that the question cannot be decided absolutely—that it should not be decided absolutely—in fact that it is one of your chief glories that you leave it undecided. But I tell you in

that case, that though you say you are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; you are, in reality, wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I am not casting my words at random. Again out of your own mouths will I judge you. All your culture, you say, is based ultimately upon this—a discrimination between right and wrong. True, profoundly true. But will you be able to say what is right and what is wrong any longer, if you don't know *for whom* anything is right and *for whom* anything is wrong—whether it is for men with immortal souls, or only with mortal bodies—who are only a little lower than the angels, or only a little better than the pigs? Whilst you can still contrive to doubt upon this matter, whilst the fabric of the old faith is still dissolving only, life still for you, the enlightened few, may preserve what happiness it has now. But when the old fabric is all dissolved, what then? When all divinity shall have

gone from love and heroism, and only utility and pleasure left, what then? Then you will have to content yourselves with complete denial; or build up again the faith that you have just pulled down—you will have to be born again, and to seek for a new Self.

‘But suppose we accept denial, you will say, what then? Many deniers have lived noble lives, though they have looked neither for a God or for a heaven. Think of Greece you will say to me, and that will answer you. No—but that is not so, and that will not answer me. The Greeks never, in your sense, denied God; they never, in your sense, denied eternal life—never, because they never knew them. They *felt* God only; they felt him unconsciously; and in denying the God they knew, they were really affirming the God they felt. But you—do not you deceive yourselves. Do not think you can ever again be as the Greeks. The world’s progress has a twofold motion. History

moves onwards round some undiscovered centre, as well as round what you consider its discovered axis ; and though it seems to repeat itself, it never can repeat itself. The Atheism of the modern world is not the Atheism of the ancient : the long black night of the winter is not the swift clear night of the vanished summer. The Greek philosopher could not darken his life, for he knew not from what mysterious source the light fell upon it. The modern philosopher does know, and he knows that it is called God, and thus knowing the source of light he can at once quench it.

‘ What will be left you then if this light be quenched ? Will art, will painting, will poetry be any comfort to you ? You have said that these were magic mirrors which reflected back your life for you. Well—will they be any better than the glass mirrors in your drawing-rooms, if they have nothing but the same listless orgy to reflect ? For

that is all that will be at last in store for you ; nay, that is the best thing that possibly can be in store for you ; the only alternative being not a listless orgy for the few, but an undreamed-of anarchy for all. I do not fear that, however. Some will be always strong, and some will be always weak ; and though if there is no God, no divine and fatherly source of order, there will be, trust me, no aristocracies, there will still be tyrannies. There will still be rich and poor ; and that will then mean happy and miserable ; and the poor will be—as I sometimes think they are already—but a mass of groaning machinery, without even the semblance of rationality ; and the rich, with only the semblance of it, but a set of gaudy, dancing marionettes, which it is the machinery's one work to keep in motion.

‘What, then, shall you do to be saved ? Rend your hearts, I say, and do not mend your garments. Seek God earnestly, and peradventure you still may find him—and I

—even I may find him also. For I—who am I that speak to you? Am I a believer? No, I am a doubter too. Once I could pray every morning, and go forth to my day's labour stayed and comforted. But now I can pray no longer. You have taken my God away from me, and I know not where you have laid him. My only consolation in my misery is that at least I am inconsolable for his loss. Yes,' cried Mr. Herbert, his voice rising into a kind of threatening wail, 'though you have made me miserable, I am not yet content with my misery. And though I too have said in my heart that there is no God, and that there is no more profit in wisdom than in folly, yet there is one folly that I will not give tongue to. I will not say Peace, peace, when there is no peace. I will not say we are still Christians, when we can sip our wine smilingly after dinner, and talk about some day defining the Father; and I will only pray that if such a Father be, he may

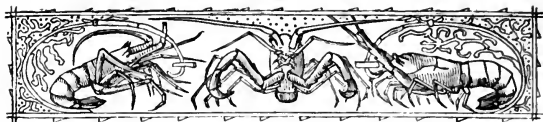
have mercy alike upon those that hated him, because they *will* see not him ; and on those who love and long for him, although they no longer *can* see him.'

Mr. Herbert's voice ceased. The curtain fell. The whirlwind was over ; the fire was over ; and after the fire, from one of the side boxes came a still small voice.

'Very poor taste—very poor taste.'

It was perceived that Dr. Jenkinson having discovered almost immediately who was really to be the preacher had stolen back silently into the theatre.





CHAPTER II.

THE following morning Miss Merton had risen early, and was sauntering slowly before breakfast up and down the broad terrace in front of the house. She inhaled the fresh delightful air ; she looked out over the breezy sea ; she scanned the splendid villa, now shining in the sunlight with its marble porticoes, and its long rows of windows ; and she thought over yesterday with all its conversations and incidents. In especial, she thought of Laurence. She thought of him as he was now, and as he had been in former times, when they had known

each other so well; and as she thought of him she sighed.

‘And he might do so much,’ she said to herself, ‘and yet he is so weak and so irresolute; wasting his time in Paris and in London, reading poetry and buying pictures, and talking philosophy he doesn’t believe in with his dilettante friends. And this place—this lovely place—how often does he come here? What does he do for his tenants and dependants—for all who ought to look for help to him? I have no patience with a man who keeps moaning about religion as he does, and yet won’t act up to the light which he must have.’

Whilst she was thus meditating, the subject of her meditations appeared upon the terrace.

‘You are out early,’ he said. ‘I have been just seeing Herbert off. He has had to go before everybody else, for he is *en route* for Italy.’

‘You look very tired,’ said Miss Merton sympathetically.

‘Oh, it is nothing,’ said Laurence, turning the subject. ‘Did you notice Leslie last evening in the garden, and how odd his manner was? Do you remember, too, the pretty song he sang the night before, and how surprised we all were at it? Well, I had a letter yesterday, from a friend both of his and mine, which explains it. The heroine of the song was not an ideal young lady, though whether one can call her real any longer is more than I can say. She is dead. I don’t know all the story; but my friend just gave me the outline, and enclosed a note for Leslie, to tell the news to him himself. He never fancies he feels anything; but what he won’t admit to himself, his manner, I am sure admitted to me, and I daresay to you too.’

‘Yes,’ said Miss Merton thoughtfully, ‘I felt sure it must be something of that kind.

But you,' she said, turning to Laurence, 'how utterly tired and worn out you look.'

'To say the truth,' Laurence answered, 'I slept very little last night. I was thinking of our culture and our enlightenment. I was thinking of—God knows what; and why should I tell you? I'm sorry,' he said, 'that we're all breaking up to-day. I wish we could have kept the party together for a little longer. I don't know what I shall do. I can't stop here; I shan't go to London—I hate London. I had almost resolved, an hour ago, to go off to Italy with Herbert.'

'By way of finding some duty to do?' asked Miss Merton quietly.

'I *have* no duties,' said Laurence. 'Didn't Herbert very truly tell us so last night? But in Italy I should at least forget that I ever might have had any. And I should be then, at any rate, with a congenial friend. Herbert and I, you see, are two fools. We

both of us want to pray, and we neither of us can.'

There was a long pause. At last Miss Merton said with some embarrassment, stooping as she did so to smell a red geranium :

'I'm sure I wish I could be of any use to you ; but really I don't quite see how I can.'

There was another pause. At last Laurence said in a very low tone :

'I cannot pray, because I do not believe in God. Will you pray for me ?'

Miss Merton turned and looked at him with a soft, serious smile.

'I did last night, if you wish very much to know,' she said, and her cheek grew slowly tinted with an unconscious blush.

'Did you ?' exclaimed Laurence with a sudden eagerness. 'Then if you cared enough for me to do that, will you care enough for me to do something far better than praying for me ? Will you—' he said, pausing and looking at her ; 'will you—'

But at that instant the gong for breakfast sounded, and the sentence died unfinished. Both he and she were perhaps a little grateful for this interruption. It relieved a sudden sense of shyness that had become painful, and to all intents and purposes their looks had already said all that need be said. It might, both felt, be securely left to find its way into words at a more convenient season. In another moment they were in the midst of that most matter-of fact bustle that precedes in country-houses the settling down to breakfast of a large party.

‘Well, Mr. Laurence,’ exclaimed Lady Ambrose, ‘all pleasant things come to an end at last. But this visit to you has really been positively delightful. And now, you must be careful not to forget me—that we are expecting you in September in Gloucestershire, to take part in our private theatricals. By-the-bye,’ she added, sinking her voice to a fit solemnity, ‘I think I told you, didn’t I

how ill the poor Duchess of — had been last week, though she's better now, I am happy to hear this morning. Ham—tongue—pigeon-pie—omelette,' she went on, as she sat down at the table, 'why, amongst all this host of good things, I don't know really what to choose. Well, suppose, Mr. Laurence, you were to bring me just the little—least bit of omelette. My dear,' she whispered to Miss Merton, who was on one side of her, 'what a dreadful blowing up Mr. Herbert gave us last night, didn't he? Now that, you know, I think is all very well in a sermon, but in a lecture, where the things are supposed to be taken more or less literally, I think it is a little out of place.'

'Did you say just now,' said Leslie, who found himself on the other side of Lady Ambrose, 'that the Duchess of — was ill?'

'Oh, it was just something I was telling Mr. Laurence,' said Lady Ambrose coldly.

‘She’s much better now, thank you. Do you know her?’

‘She’s my Aunt,’ said Leslie.

Lady Ambrose turned round and looked Leslie full in the face. As she looked, a smile began to dimple her cheek, and light up her sweet grey eyes.

‘You *don’t* say so!’ she exclaimed at last. ‘Why of course you are. How stupid of me not to have found that out before. To be sure—you are the redoubtable Eton boy, who made such a dreadful commotion at Daleham by wanting to run away with the nursery governess. And to think that I have only discovered you at this last moment, when we are all of us going to say good-bye!’

‘Your carriage is at the door, my Lady,’ said a servant.

‘Already!’ said Lady Ambrose. ‘How time flies! Dr. Jenkinson, you and I are going to the train together, I believe. And now, Mr. Leslie,’ she went on, ‘Mr. Laurence

is coming to us, in September, for some private theatricals. I don't know if you do anything in that way yourself. But perhaps if you are in England, and have no better engagements, you will come with him. At any rate, if you won't, please to remember I shall think it very ill-natured of you.'

'Thank you,' said Leslie smiling, 'I am not ill-natured.'

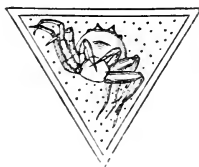
'I'm quite ready, Lady Ambrose, if you are,' said Dr. Jenkinson briskly; 'and now, Laurence,' he said, as he was standing in the portico, whilst Lady Ambrose was getting into the carriage, 'good-bye; I've had a most pleasant visit. But as to your Utopia, your ideal of the future—' he added confidentially, 'it has been said, foolishly enough, that God was the Brocken-phantom of self, projected on the mists of the *non-ego*. Well—your Utopia was the Brocken-phantom of the present, projected on the mists of the imprac-

licable. It was simply the present with its homelier details left out. Good-bye—good-bye.’

‘Then in that case,’ said Laurence, as he bade adieu to the Doctor, ‘it is a comfort to know from you, that the Present as it is, is the highest state of things conceivable.’

‘Good-bye,’ said Lady Ambrose, with a smile in her beautiful frank eyes. ‘Good-bye Mr. Leslie, and mind that you don’t forget September.’

THE END.



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